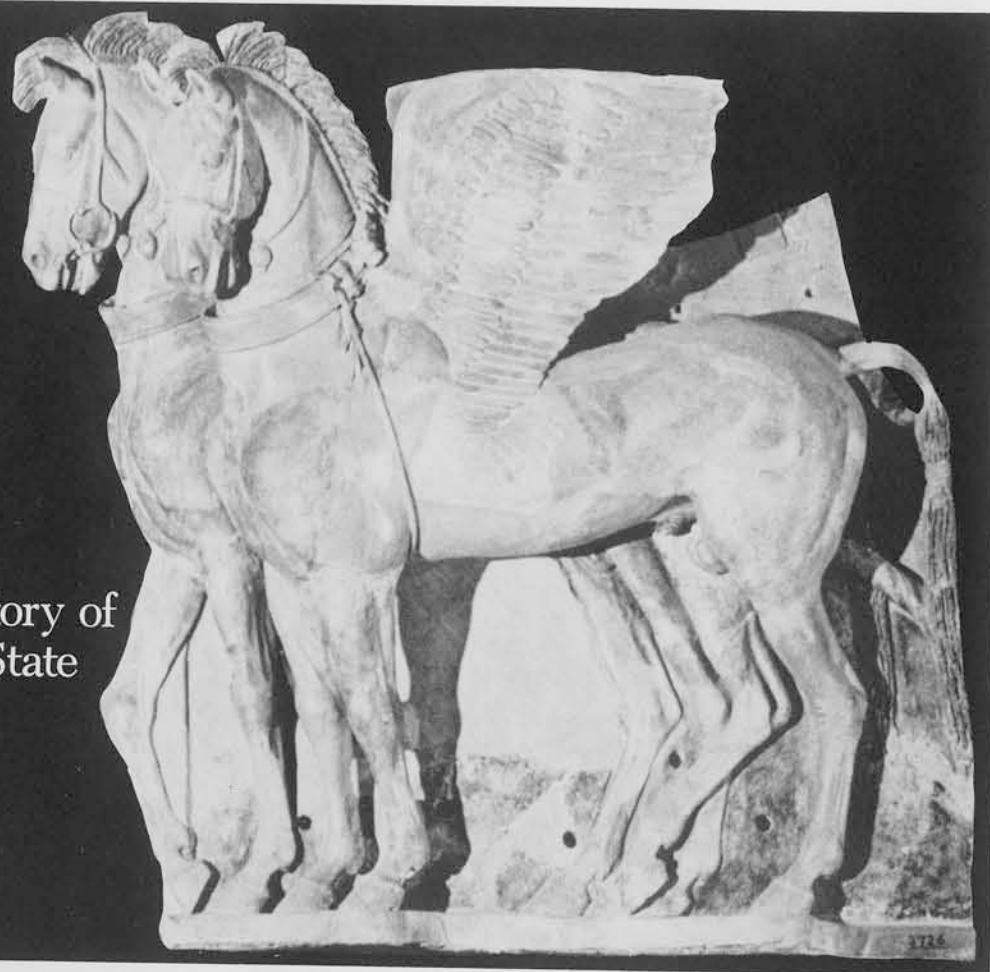


Tarquinia Antefixes

A View of the History of
an Etruscan City-State

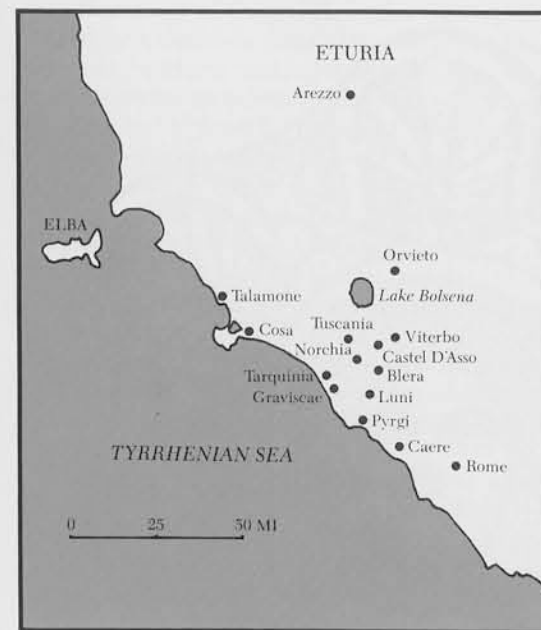
MARILYN GOLDBERG



In The University Museum is a collection of architectural fragments from the Etruscan city-state of Tarquinia (Fig. 2), perhaps best known for the wall paintings of its archaic and classical tombs. The fragments in the Museum are part of a whole series of terracotta plaques that covered and decorated the exposed wooden beams of the superstructures of many important Etruscan buildings (Andrén 1940) (see Fig. 3). The University Museum terracottas have a special significance because most of them decorated the largest Etruscan temple still extant, the building nicknamed the Ara della Regina by more recent Tarquinians. The Ara della Regina was built at the height of a Tarquinian 'renaissance' in the first half of the 4th century B.C., a period whose importance is only recently coming to be understood.

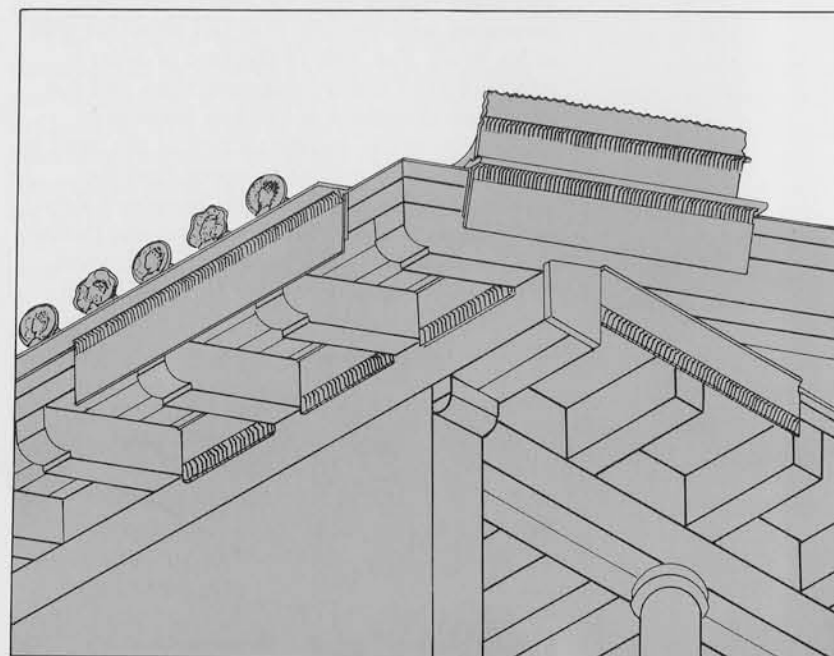
The decoration of such a large building would have been undertaken by the most skilled craftsmen in the area and have influenced the types of plaques chosen by other Etruscans, whether they were building new temples or replacing the worn terracottas of older ones. The famous winged horses in the National Museum in Tarquinia (Fig. 1), which formed part of a plaque covering the end of

1
Winged horses from a
plaque on the Ara della
Regina.



2
Map of Etruria.

3
Reconstruction of the en-
tablature of the Ara della
Regina.



the ridge pole in the pedimental area, are an example of the high level of achievement of the artists at work on the Ara della Regina. The University Museum terracottas, however, also have an important story to tell about the extent of the artistic and economic influence at work in Tarquinia that went hand in hand with its territorial expansion at the end of the 5th and in the 4th century B.C.

Of the seventeen terracottas in The University Museum, ten are fragments of antefixes with part of the face preserved, and six show fragments of the shell surrounding the face. The antefixes are coverings which stood along the eaves of the double pitched roof of the Ara della Regina and masked the ends of the rounded cover tiles of the roof (Fig. 3). The antefixes are mold-made and are of the shell type; the front of the antefix is a face in relief framed by a large, almost circular, concave shell. They represent maenads and silens, woodland creatures who were attendants of Dionysos and among the most popular subjects for antefixes in Etruria.

In The University Museum there are two types of maenads and one silen, and they represent different phases in the decoration of the temple. When the plaques on the temple became damaged through weathering or other circumstances, new ones were made using the original molds or new molds made from a prototype. Eventually, however, the molds cracked or became blurred or too small because of shrinkage as a result of recasting, and new ones had to be made. These new plaques reflected the current style and taste rather than that of the initial phase.

4
Maenad I; University
Museum, MS 1819.
H. 0.20 m.; W. 0.13 m.

5
Reconstruction of Maenad
I.



Tarquinia at Its Height

Maenad I (Figs. 4, 5), represented by one example in the collection (MS 1819), was part of the first decoration of the Ara della Regina. The head and base of the antefix, with part of the framing band around the head, are preserved. The maenad's face is oval with heavy lidded eyes and a down-turned mouth. Her hair is parted in the middle and flows in parallel, gently waving strands to the neck. The maenad wears a torque (twisted necklace) around her neck and a diadem decorated with design in relief. Because the face shows a combination of Severe (ca. 480–450 B.C. in Greece) and Fifth Century (ca. 450–400 B.C. in Greece) features, the antefix is to be dated to the very end of the 5th or most probably to the first quarter of the 4th century. It shows close similarities to antefixes from three temples at Orvieto, which have been dated to 400–360 B.C. on the basis of style (Roncalli 1973: 90, 103–104).

Maenad I antefixes were alternated with silens on the eaves of the Ara della Regina in both phases of its first decoration. Several examples of the companion to Maenad I, now in the National Museum in Tarquinia and the Archaeological Museum in Florence, have been found (Fig. 6), although none are in The

University Museum. The shell of the Silen I antefix is the same as that of Maenad I, and the features show a similar sharp definition. The silen had a pronounced brow ridge, straight and thin nose, crisply curling beard, and small equine ears. He wears a wreath decorated with tendrils that fall on either side of his head. The style of the face of Silen I reflects Fifth Century characteristics and has even been described as Phidian because of similarities to our reconstruction of the head of the famous gold and ivory statue that the sculptor Phidias made for the Temple of Zeus in Olympia and to the figures from the Parthenon friezes whose sculptors Phidias directed. Very similar silens decorated three different buildings in Orvieto (Andr n: pl. 62:201, pl. 68:220). Therefore the date of Silen I agrees with that of Maenad I.

Both Maenad I and Silen I have very close parallels which have been found in the Etruscan cities of Orvieto and Talamone (see map, Fig. 2) and in a terracotta workshop near Blera within the territory of 4th century Tarquinia. The faces of these antefixes are identical, although the details below the face may differ. The hair and necklaces of some of the maenads are longer; a few silens wear the skin

of a feline tied below the chin. It is my suspicion that most of these differences were occasioned by a desire to change the height of the antefixes, without making major changes in the prototype. In addition, the skin of a panther is suitable for a follower of Dionysos, who is usually associated with the Etruscan Herakles, although the skin on the silen antefix is usually called that of a lion. The distinction seems not to have been important to the Etruscans themselves, as can be seen by the blurring of the two, silen and Herakles, in the 3rd century decorations of the Ara della Regina and other temples. It should be noted that Herakles is closest to the name of the Etruscan divinity, whereas the Romans called him Hercules.

The geographical area in which these almost identical maenad and silen antefixes were found takes on special significance in the light of the history of Tarquinia in the late 5th and the 4th centuries, a time of great territorial expansion. Tarquinia was moving eastward into Volsinian territory toward Lake Bolsena, which became known for a time as the Tarquinian Lake. Towns such as Biedano and Viterbo, which had been in the orbit of her southern neighbor Caere, were absorbed into the city state of Tarquinia. Luni sul Mignone, on the border between Tarquinia and Caere, was turned into a fortified town either by the Tarquinians or Caeretans. Norchia, Castel D'Asso, Blera, and Tuscania all came under Tarquinian domination (Torelli 1982: 218–219).

This territorial encroachment, which is documented by current archaeological survey and excavation, is confirmed by written evidence as well. One of the *elogia* on a statue base honoring three members of the prominent Tarquinian noble family, the Spurinna, and set up by their descendants in the 1st century A.D., records the power of the family at this time. A Spurinna led a naval expedition to Sicily in aid of the Athenians in their campaign against Syracuse toward the end of the Peloponnesian War. Another Spurinna, while a Tarquinian magistrate, had power to meddle in Caeretan affairs and apparently ousted a Caeretan king (Torelli 1975: 43–44). A second inscription, on a 4th century sarcophagus, records the noble marriage of a woman of the Spurinna family to a wealthy man of Tuscania, another indication of the extension of the Tarquinian nobility's influence.

The *Elogia* of the Spurinna family can be combined with an inscription on their 4th cen-

6
Reconstruction of Silen I.



tury family tomb and the information provided by the historians Livy and Diodoros to explain the position of Tarquinia in the wars between the Etruscans and Romans at this time. Frequently the Tarquinii are singled out by these historians as leaders of the Etruscans against Rome. The evidence from Tarquinia demonstrates that members of the Spurinna family held the position of leading magistrate not only in the city-state of Tarquinia, but also in an Etruscan league known as the League of the Twelve Peoples. This League was always a religious confederation and occasionally served a military role as well. Although its political strength or even nature is not agreed upon, it seems likely that the Spurinna justified their city's territorial expansion in its name. And surely the threat of Rome to the south and the Gauls to the north would have provided the pretext to allow such a claim military backing. As a result, the nobles of Tarquinia gained a good deal of much needed agricultural land at a time when Caere, her Etruscan neighbor to the south, was entering into a period of accommodation with Rome, and the people of the interior had thus lost their protection against the twin threat of the Gauls and the Romans. It can be seen as a measure of the power of

Tarquinius that she ended her battles with Rome in 351 B.C. with a truce of forty years, neither side apparently having defeated the other.

In economic terms, as a result of these political maneuvers, the sophisticated crafts of the city of Tarquinia had a new market in the interior; agricultural surplus from the interior was probably exported, to judge by the renewed building activity in Gravisca, one of Tarquinia's harbor towns (Torelli 1971). Tarquinian sculptors produced numerous sarcophagi for the rich in the entire area. Nobles could again afford the luxury of painted tombs while, inland, chamber tombs were used as burial places by prosperous smaller landowners.

It is at this time that the Ara della Regina was built. This largest of the known Etruscan temples was almost certainly constructed in the first half of the 4th century and reflects the religious, political, and economic prominence of the city. The craftsmen who made the plaques, among which is the University Museum Maenad I, received commissions elsewhere in this new Tarquinian orbit.

The Villa Selvasecca near Blera, where examples of Maenad I and Silen I were also found, was certainly the factory out of which these craftsmen worked (Andr n 1969). They seem to have learned their craft in Orvieto, as the closeness of the Phase I antefixes to their more numerous parallels in Orvieto show. Certainly the workshop was in an excellent location. The town of Blera was at an intersection of the road east from Tarquinia on the coast, the north-south road that led from Caere north to Orvieto, and one leading northwest to Vulci and beyond. This last road is the one that led to Talamone, a city apparently not under the political sway of Tarquinia but certainly impressed with the Ara della Regina. When an important temple in this city to the north was being renovated, the new antefixes were of the Ara della Regina type.

Waning Influence of Tarquinia

Yet the situation in Tarquinia had undergone a distinct change by the end of the 4th century, one which the second set of plaques helps to document. Six examples of Maenad II (MS 1818, 1820, 1824, 1825, 1827, 2143) are in The

7
Maenad II; University
Museum, MS 1824.
H. 0.26 m.; W. 0.30 m.



8
Reconstruction of Maenad
II.



9
Silen II; University
Museum, MS 1822.
H. 0.24 m.; W. 0.19 m.



10
Reconstruction of Silen II.



University Museum (Figs. 7, 8). The best preserved shows a woman with a soft, almost trapezoidal face and a thick mass of irregularly waving hair. She wears a veil over a diadem decorated with a floral motif in relief. Around her head is a band which ends in a large acanthus leaf on either side of her neck. Out of these leaves grow tendrils that, along with flowers, decorate the shell. The paint on one of the maenads is preserved and gives a hint of the striking effect that the antefixes would have made when new. The skin is white, and red was used for the lips, eyebrows, lashes, and pupils, as well as the background of the shell; the diadem is yellow, and traces of red and white remain on the veil. The antefix can be dated to the second half of the 4th century because of the trapezoidal face and the bulky hair. No close parallels for Maenad II have yet been found.

The features of Silen II, of which three examples (MS 1821-1823) are in The University Museum (Figs. 9, 10), show the same softness that is to be seen on Maenad II. His face, which was painted red, is broad, and the lips and nose are wide. His beard falls in irregular soft curls, and his forehead is furrowed. He has small equine ears. On his bald head is a

wreath of leaves from which fall single curly locks or tendrils. The band surrounding his head ends in the same acanthus leaves as on Maenad II, and the design of the shell was probably the same as well. This silen is very close in features both to a Roman copy of a portrait of Philip of Macedon now in Copenhagen that is dated 350-325 B.C. and to a head of Zeus on a stater (Greek coin) of 355 B.C. (Santangelo 1948: 12, fig. 13). It is therefore likely to have been made in the second half of that century. Again, no close parallels for this type have been found, although some antefixes from Orvieto, again with feline skins, are stylistically related.

It may be possible to narrow down the dates of the Type II antefixes further. Although there is no way to determine the exact length of use for a set of architectural terracottas with no stratified context, an estimate can be made. Certainly, any plaques such as antefixes, which stood on the roof, would suffer from weathering and have to be replaced more frequently than decorations standing in a more protected place on the building. The life span of the Type I antefixes may well have been as short as twenty-five or thirty-five years. If the first replacements were made from the original

molds, or molds made from the original prototypes, a further twenty-five years or more would be added to the life span of Type I. Eventually, however, new molds had to be made and these reflected new styles. If the Ara della Regina was built ca. 375 B.C. with Maenad I and Silen I as its antefixes, the Type II replacements probably were not put up until late in the 4th century B.C., a date not contradicted by their style.

Can the lack of parallels for these Type II antefixes confirm this date? Or to ask the question from another perspective, is there a time when the influence of Tarquinia waned to the point that other cities were not interested in copying the decoration of the Ara della Regina? The Tarquinians had ended their war with Rome in 351 B.C. with a truce of forty years, which was renewed in 308 B.C. Possibly Tarquinia suffered some loss of her extended territory in 351, although the evidence from the sources is not clear on this point. Certainly, in the third quarter of the 4th century B.C., quite a few Tarquinian nobles could still afford to be buried in painted tombs, and the use of chamber tombs for prosperous landowners in the interior continued. Stone carvers continued to carve and sell sarcophagi. However, these manifestations of prosperity decreased in number. By the first half of the 3rd century B.C., towns in the interior were fortifying themselves and increasing in importance as the power of Tarquinia waned (Colonna 1978: 406-410). Some citizens of these smaller towns were buried with rich jewelry and grave goods, but the number of Tarquinian nobles with rich burials decreased, and the use of painted tombs dropped off considerably. Although all the tombs in the city have not yet been excavated, enough of this date have been found to substantiate this change.

This evidence of a weakening economy would seem to suggest that Tarquinia suffered a loss of land and political power in the last quarter of the 4th and the first part of the 3rd century. The wealth derived from the agricultural surplus of the once expanded territory was now in the hands of the prosperous citizens of towns in the interior. For a while, the Tarquinian noble families who still held land and the newly important people of the towns in the interior could support the stone carvers of Tarquinia, but they had little work on a monumental level that would involve the craftsmen of architectural terracottas such as those in the workshop at Blera. Nor were the political power and pretensions of Tarquinia, which had been symbolized in the Ara della Regina, any longer so great as to recommend the temple to men at work on temples in other cities in southern Etruria. In fact, most of the cities of southern Etruria were having their

own problems with Rome as well. The economic prosperity of the sophisticated city of Tarquinia continued for a while, although its political power was on the wane. Tarquinia lost control of its external affairs when it lost control of the land it had acquired in the later 5th and 4th centuries B.C. And indeed Tarquinia is not mentioned as a combatant, let alone as a leader, in the Etruscan wars with Rome in 311 B.C. and the first half of the 3rd century B.C., although an argument *ex silentio* cannot be taken as proof. It is no wonder that no parallels for Maenad II and Silen II have been found.

Tarquinia under Roman Control

Other antefixes can also provide a postscript to an account of these developments in Tarquinia. A series of unpublished shell antefixes from the Ara della Regina, in the National Museum in Tarquinia, show Minerva and the Roman Hercules, rather than the earlier silen and maenad. Their parallels all come from an area north of Tarquinia and the close similarity indicates manufacture in the same workshop. Types identical to those in Tarquinia have been found in Cosa, a colony established by the Romans in 273 B.C., and very similar, possibly identical, ones have been found at Talamone and Arezzo. A date somewhere around the second quarter of the 3rd century B.C. would be appropriate for these antefixes on the basis of the Cosa material.

Although Minerva and Herakles appeared with some frequency on Etruscan temples, as *acroteria* (sculpture that stood on the roof of the building), as part of pedimental compositions, and even as antefixes, they were always shown as full figures. No Minerva and Herakles antefixes of the shell type that were found in Etruria have been securely dated before the ones of the Ara della Regina type, although the silens with lion skins can be considered an intermediate type. Heads of Minerva and Hercules, although very different in iconography, were used on antefixes before the 3rd century B.C., but in the south, in Campania. If the use of these types belongs to a more southern tradition or reflects a southern taste, their choice by Roman colonists at Cosa for their first temple there would make sense. The Etruscans, who had already seen antefixes of bearded silens wearing feline skins, would have been ready to accept this adaptation. The silen's combination with a Minerva antefix would have made sense to the Etruscans, who often linked the two deities. The maenad and silen were replaced, at least in a few instances, by the strong and armed divinities of the Mediterranean pantheon. To the military Roman colonists, such a choice would have had double appeal.

Conclusions

Although the Cosans may have been the trend setters, the *coroplasts*—craftsmen who worked in clay rather than stone and who made the antefixes as well as the other decorations at Cosa—were Tarquinians. The workshop at Blera continued to function, serving others even at the time of the decline of Tarquinia. The most southern market for this workshop seems to have dried up, although the north could still give it commissions. Talamone had looked to Tarquinian craftsmen in the early 4th century B.C. and again did so. Apparently Etruscans as far north as Arezzo did so as well. During the 3rd century B.C., Arezzo had become a wealthy industrial center for metal working and could afford to buy from the older, established workshops. Although the political power of Tarquinia was spent, the artistic skill and the commissions of their craftsmen lasted into the middle of the 3rd century B.C.

Thus, the antefixes in The University Museum help to document the history of the

Etruscan city-state of Tarquinia. At the end of the 5th century B.C. and during the first half of the 4th, Tarquinian nobles began to amass more land, probably taking advantage of their southern neighbors' preoccupation with Rome. Tarquinian leaders seem to have attempted to rule in the name of an Etruscan League and, during the earlier part of the 4th century, were successful. Increased agricultural surpluses brought wealth and stimulated the arts and crafts of the city. The Ara della Regina was built and became an emblem and model for other city states. Yet with the continuing victories of Rome in the late 4th and the 3rd centuries B.C., the small land empire of Tarquinia shrank and so did the number of wealthy nobles. The craftsmen of Tarquinia, while still skilled, had fewer commissions. Eventually, in the 3rd century B.C., the Romans themselves provided a market for Tarquinia and still wealthy Etruscan cities to the north. The city-state of Tarquinia, however, by that point had lost its earlier preeminence.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. G. Roger Edwards for so kindly aiding my study of the material in The University Museum; Dr. Paola Pelagatti, Superintendent of Antiquities for South Etruria, for allowing me to see the terracottas from Tarquinia now in the museum in Tarquinia; and Dr. Maria Cataldi for permitting me to read part of her unpublished dissertation on the same subject. Thanks to support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, I was able to see the material in Italy. Roberta Bauleh provided the reconstructions in this article.



Marilyn Y. Goldberg is an Assistant Professor in the Ancient Studies Department of the University of Maryland Baltimore County and Associate Director of the University of Maryland Center for Mediterranean Archaeology. After receiving her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr College in 1977, she has been studying Classical buildings through their architectural decorations. She has published several articles on Archaic Greek buildings and their decora-

tions, as well as on the Ara della Regina. Her current research deals with architectural decorations from Italy in the Archaic period. She is also working on a project to determine whether the technique of thermoluminescence can be refined for use in dating Classical artifacts of terracotta.

Bibliography

Andrén, Arvid
1940
Architectural Terracottas from Etrusco-Italic Temples, Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup.
1969
"Blera (Località Selva-secca)—Villa rustica etrusco-romana con manifattura di terrecotte architettoniche: Le terrecotte architettoniche" in *Notizie degli scavi di Antichità* 23:59-71.
Colonna, Giovanni
1978
Norchia I. Rome: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche.

Roncagli, F.
1973

"Il 'Marte' di Todi" in *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana de Archeologica, Memorie*, 11:2.

Santangelo, Maria
1948

"Una terracotta di Falerii e lo Zeus di Fidia" in *Bollettino d'Arte* 33:1-14.

Torelli, Mario
1971

"Il santuario di Hera a Gravisca" in *Parola del Passato* 26:44-67.

1975
Elogia Tarquiniensia, Florence: G. C. Sansoni.

1982
Storia degli Etruschi, Rome-Bari: Laterza.