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Raffaele D’Amato responds to Christian Koepfer’s letter in issue IV.2.

Dear Editor,
I am writing in response to Christian Koepfer about my reconstruction of an Etruscan centurion of the 4th century BC on the cover of Ancient Warfare IV.1.

First of all I would like to invite him to read the article well and to not just look at the images. The article states that the basic attire has been copied from a funerary slab (not an urn) from Volterra representing an Etruscan centurion and the sacrifice of Roman prisoners. As you know I furnished the picture of the slab, but it could not be published because of its bad quality. However, the slab (now without any color) represents a centurion dressed exactly as Johnny Shumate illustrated according to my instructions, i.e. with Apulo-Corinthian helmet and quilted armor. Obviously the objects missing in the main source have been reconstructed from other contemporary sources.

Secondly, I would like just remind him of the common employment of this kind of helmet in the Etruscan area regardless of their Italiote origin or import, which is not under discussion. This is attested not only by the specimens Koepfer recorded, but is also evidenced by large number of such helmets represented in Etruscan urns and paintings (Tarquinia, for instance), as well in early Roman artwork (funerary cists from Praeneste) dated from the 5th to the 2nd century BC. On this topic I recommend Connolly’s Greece and Rome at War (chapter on the Italian military systems) and especially Bottini in Antike Helme (p. 121, 4th century BC).

I am sorry to disappoint him, the traces of color of the textile armor on the urn is pink-brown, exactly as reproduced by Shumate, (the white color is given by the alabaster background) and a second warrior on the same urn wears the same armor with the same color. This may not be so clear on the photo (though visible on the upper row of the quilting material), but quite obvious when observing the urn in person. I do not doubt the existence of armor in a similar color, considering the artists’ knowledge as well as the use of painted armor made of metallic or perishable materials.

It is true that the shoes are lower than those on the sculpture, but the caligae of the original slab, reaching up to the calves, are scarcely visible. We do not have actual specimens of caligae (to my knowledge) until the 1st century BC so it is clear that a reconstruction of a low calf Etruscan boot must be based on the lower part of the visible urn and early extant archaeological specimens.

The scabbard is based on the reconstruction by Quesada Sanz of a Spanish falcata identical to the model employed (JRMS 8 p. 254). The same swords were used concurrently by both italic and iberian peoples, so some scabbards must have been similar.

Finally, on the wide use of painted metallic helmets in Ancient times, including Pseudo-Corinthian helmets with lines painted in white, I recommend the reconstruction by German Archaeologists in Bunte Götter, p. 113.

Raffaele D’Amato

The debate: Clash of the phalanx

Dear Editor,
The debate over othismos can be reconciled by a liberal dose of cold equations in place of heated speculation. If there is to be a literal push of all ranks in the phalanx, then the hoplites must be packed tight, belly to back with their shields in between. Any space between men will cause the force from men behind to be absorbed within the file and not passed on to their foes. Once we realize that the hoplites must act like a dense crowd, some elements of the Orthodox view become untenable. The force generated by a hoplite charging like an unhorsed knight into the enemy line pales in comparison with the steady, grinding push of dense packed ranks described in the Crowd-Othismos model. Thus, from a pushing perspective a charge of more than few meters adds nothing, and in fact saps the power of phalanx as its cohesion deteriorates.

Decoupling the charge from the push eliminates much of the case against a literal othismos. Battles do not need to proceed to othismos immediately and may never get there. An extended period of spear-fencing with phalanxes some 1.5-2 meter apart picking at each other or even javelin throwing in the early period could occur. In a crowd, men are pushing while standing up and must repack in tight after every short advance. This could be sustained for a very long time, with any advance being a slow cycle of the crowd becoming more and less dense like a crawling earthworm.

Othismos could cease for extended periods after it started, with men