

Conference

Etruscan Literacy in its Social Context

Institute of Classical Studies
University of London
22–23 September 2010

The conference arises from the work of the AHRC Project:
“Etruscan Literacy in its social context, 8th–5th centuries BC”,
based at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London
[Principal Investigator: Professor Ruth Whitehouse
Co-investigator: Dr John Wilkins
Research Fellow: Dr Kathryn Lomas]

First Announcement

Call for Papers

The social impact of literacy in early societies is a topic which has been the subject of much recent research. In the study of ancient Italy, specifically, new discoveries and new analyses of Etruscan inscriptions have flourished in recent years. However, many of these studies have focused primarily on epigraphic and linguistic aspects. Although this conference aims to contribute to these studies, its aim is to move away from issues of linguistic and morphological analysis and concentrate instead specifically on the social context of writing in the Etruscan world. We will examine the social and cultural impact of the adoption of writing, and will address themes such as how we can define literacy and assess how widespread it was; what groups adopted literacy, and what the social purposes of reading and writing were. The conference will examine these issues from a range of perspectives, and in the context not only of Etruria itself, but of the Etruscan world as a whole, within the general context of Italy in the first millennium BC. Examples of questions we would like to address are:

Writers and readers among the Etruscans

Was literacy restricted by class, gender, age or any other social parameter? Were the people who did the inscribing (potters, metal-workers, stone-carvers etc) fully literate or not? What was the relationship between those who composed or commissioned texts and those who inscribed them? How was writing taught and transmitted?

The social purposes of Etruscan writing

Were inscriptions meant to be read and, if so, by whom? Was writing used for single or multiple purposes, practical or symbolic? Was it used to convey everyday messages and, if so, between living people or between the living and the dead/divine? Were the messages conveyed by the content of the writing, by the material employed, by the use and location of the artefact or monument, or by combinations of all of these?

Writing and identity formation

The creation and reinforcement of identities at different levels – individual, kin group, community, supra-community – is characteristic of state societies. How might Etruscan writing, and particularly the practice of naming, have contributed to these processes?

The organisers, Kathryn Lomas, Ruth Whitehouse and John Wilkins, invite papers that address any of these issues or related themes. We particularly welcome contributions that trace changes in any of these aspects through time or compare their development in different areas of the Etruscan world.

Abstracts (no more than 500 words) should be sent to **both** Ruth Whitehouse (*R.Whitehouse@ucl.ac.uk*) and Kathryn Lomas (*K.Lomas@ucl.ac.uk*) by **April 30th 2010**.