

Cetamura Results Prior to 2000

Excavations at the hilltop of Cetamura del Chianti (695m above sea level) near Siena by Florida State University have unearthed a habitation with a long and diverse history, encompassing an Etruscan settlement, a Roman villa, and a medieval fort. Each period has multiple chronological phases. The excavations are conducted under the supervision and with permission of the Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana, Acting Director Dr. Carlotta Cianferoni. The site was originally discovered in 1964 by Alvaro Tracchi, of San Giovanni Valdarno. A detailed description of results obtained up until the year 2000 is provided by the [catalogue](#) of an exhibition on Cetamura held in that year, *Cetamura Antica, Tradizioni del Chianti*, at the Centro di Informazione Turistica, Gaiole in Chianti. The catalogue, edited by Nancy T. de Grummond, is available in English and in Italian (tr. by Alba Frascarelli) and provides a listing of essential bibliography up to 2000 (pp. 43-44).

Excavations have been conducted in two major areas ([fig. 1](#)), Zone I, the arx or acropolis, and Zone II, a lower slope where remains of an Etruscan artisans' quarter have been discovered. Zone I ([fig. 2](#)) has produced evidence of all known periods at Cetamura, but because each successive wave of inhabitants cleared the high zone for its own usage, the stratigraphy is very uneven. The section designated as Area G has been the main focus of investigation. The earliest period, the Etruscan Archaic (7th-6th centuries BCE), is known from finds of bucchero pottery ([fig. 3](#)), though very little was found in its original context. Only a single post pit in this zone provides evidence of Archaic habitation, suggesting a building held up by timber posts. Nearby is a well, cut out of the sandstone bedrock ([fig. 4](#)) that may also have been existing in the Archaic period. Still under excavation, the well has been probed to a depth of ca. 26m, but so far the materials extracted are almost exclusively the result of dumping episodes from Roman and medieval habitation. Enormous amounts of Etruscan and Roman brick and tile have been removed, along with Roman coins, glass and pottery (Italian sigillata and occasional sherds of African sigillata). The well was vaulted with large slabs of sandstone in a gable construction ([fig. 5](#)), and featured a stone well-head with an opening of ca. 50cm ([fig. 6](#)).

No firm evidence of activity in the 5th century or the first half of the 4th century BCE has been found so far at Cetamura, on either Zone I or Zone II. Excavations on the scarp between Zone I and Zone II have revealed what is probably a gate to the acropolis dating ca. 325-300 BCE (see [Latest Results](#)). Cetamura's most vigorous period seems to be the Hellenistic, with two phases, ca. 300-150 BCE and ca. 150 to the 1st century BCE. These are well represented by actual structures on Zone II, but on the acropolis so far the finds have been largely in a redeposited context. Included are Etrusco-Campanian black gloss wares as well as Volterranean presigillata and local wares for storage, cooking and the table.

With the Roman period we now find walls **in situ** ([fig. 2](#)), all belonging to a modest bathing complex that was probably part of a Roman villa or possibly a **mansio**, located at a crossing of roads hypothesized as running from Volterra to Arezzo and from Siena to Fiesole. Two rooms (2 and 4) contained remnants of their hypocaust heating system ([fig. 7](#) shows rooms 2 and 3), with a furnace and drainage system placed in between them ([fig. 8](#) shows the entire complex). Numerous fragments of box flue tiles and window glass belong to a phase in the mid-1st century CE, but it is clear that the baths had more than one phase. Terra sigillata of the period of

Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE) has been found in the terracing for one wall, and lamps and coins of the later 1st and 2nd century CE imply the continued usage of the baths. Artifacts associated with the baths, beyond the sherds of pottery and glass vessels, include items associated with the modest social status of the frequenters of the baths: a bronze mirror handle, a pendant from a soldier's apron, a bone hair pin, a bronze fibula, a bronze ring ([fig. 9](#)). Numerous gaming pieces (knucklebones, pottery discs, polished stones) reflect an aspect of leisure, as perhaps also does a stone slab incised with a grid, tentatively identified as a gaming board ([fig. 10](#)).

The medieval period at Cetamura (see [fig. 1](#) and [fig. 2](#)) is attested in documents, especially of the 11th and 12th centuries CE, from the archives of the Badia a Coltibuono, to which the lands belonged intermittently during that period. The site is referred to as Civitamura, "Wall City," perhaps in reference to walls from antiquity still remaining on the site, or perhaps because medieval fortifications had been erected on the hill. One document alludes to Civitamura as a **castrum**, i.e., a fortified settlement. The fortifications included sandstone walls ([fig. 7](#) and [fig. 11](#)) and an extensive earthwork (**agger**), running along the north side of Zone I. The construction of the **castrum** entailed demolition of parts of the baths, probably so that stone and brick could be reused for building here and elsewhere, but also happened to preserve a significant amount of the baths under the **agger**. Two rooms of the medieval settlement have been identified (1 and 5), though the overall plan of the complex, roughly rectangular, is far from clear. Among the medieval artifacts from Cetamura are numerous sherds of **testo**, the low, thick ceramic pan used for making hearth bread, and of a combed ware often blackened from contact with the fire.

The finds in Zone II are mostly of the Etruscan Hellenistic period ([fig. 12](#)). Of the greatest interest is an artisan's zone (the Northwest Complex), which has yielded a kiln dating to the first phase, ca. 300-150 BCE ([fig. 13](#)) and other evidence of activity by Etruscan workers. The kiln, Structure K, is one of some 30 Etruscan kilns known, and provides valuable information about the processes of making brick, tile and ceramic weights for the loom. The rectangular structure is built of irregular sandstone masonry, with exterior measurements of ca. 3.85 x 3m. The ground plan features a central partition, the **mastio**, subpartitions within the east half and the west half of the kiln, and two stoking channels or **prae furnia**, located on the northern side of the kiln. The **mastio** and the subpartitions as well as the interior lining of the kiln on the east and west sides were made with a heat-resistant refractory material known to have withstood temperatures as high as 1000° C. Numerous fragments of refractory brick were found in and around the kiln, some of them in a shape that is so far without parallel ([fig. 14](#)). A standard unit of length or module of ca. 33cm seems to have been used in making these bricks; this "Cetamura foot" can be found utilized in other architectural remains at the site preserved well enough to reflect their original measurements.

Also within the Northwest Complex was found a pair of cisterns, Structure A ([fig. 15](#)) and Structure B, not necessarily in use for water storage at the same time. Structure B was originally constructed in Phase I and then was re-worked in Phase II, at the time that Structure A was built. Also at that time was constructed a drain running through B ([fig. 16](#)), which evidently carried the water into Structure A. The walls of Phase II are very thick, of varying widths exceeding 1m, and imply that these two structures created a basement for a large building of the last period of Etruscan Cetamura. To the north of the cisterns is Structure C ([fig. 17](#)), a large paved room

that was built at the same time as the first phase of Structure B. The rectangular interior measures 4.95 x 6.95m, which, converted with the Cetamura foot of 33cm, yields a plan of 15 x 21.06. The original construction of Structure B was planned as a pendant to Structure C and seems to have had identical measurements.

The purpose of Structure C is not certain, but it may well have been a room used for spinning and weaving. A surprising number of tools associated with making textiles has been found in the Northwest Complex, including loom weights, spindle whorls and spools ([fig. 18](#)), as well as small stone grinders, possibly used for grinding dyes. Several of these artifacts were found in debris within Structure C and thus seem to have been in use there at the time the building was destroyed. Also in the area were found traces of yet another craft, the working of iron, as indicated by fist-sized metallic **scoriae**.

Finds within the Northwest Complex have been abundant. Typically under a thin stratum containing sporadic sherds of medieval date and a sometimes thicker layer of Roman date lie dense strata of the Hellenistic period. The cisterns Structure A and Structure B were filled with artifacts, including Etrusco-Campanian black gloss pottery ([fig. 19](#)), Volterranean *presigillata* ([fig. 20](#)); inscribed with the name of the owner, LAUSINI), thousands of sherds of local wares, and small objects such as an Etruscan conical bead of blue and yellow glass ([fig. 21](#)) and an Etruscan coin of the 3rd century BCE.

Of particular interest from the kiln area was an Etruscan carnelian [scarab](#) of the 4th century BCE; within Structure K itself were found several dozen fragments, scattered throughout the kiln, of an Etruscan black-gloss sacrificial **patera** ([fig. 22](#)), providing a unique instance of the consecration of an Etruscan kiln to the gods. The presence of this type of ritual was confirmed by the discovery within one of the *praefurnia* of a tiny votive black-gloss cup ([fig. 23](#)), only partially chipped at the rim and on the base, a second example of a vessel of fine ware offered to the gods in hopes that they would spare the large batch of brick, tile and loom weights to be fired in the kiln.

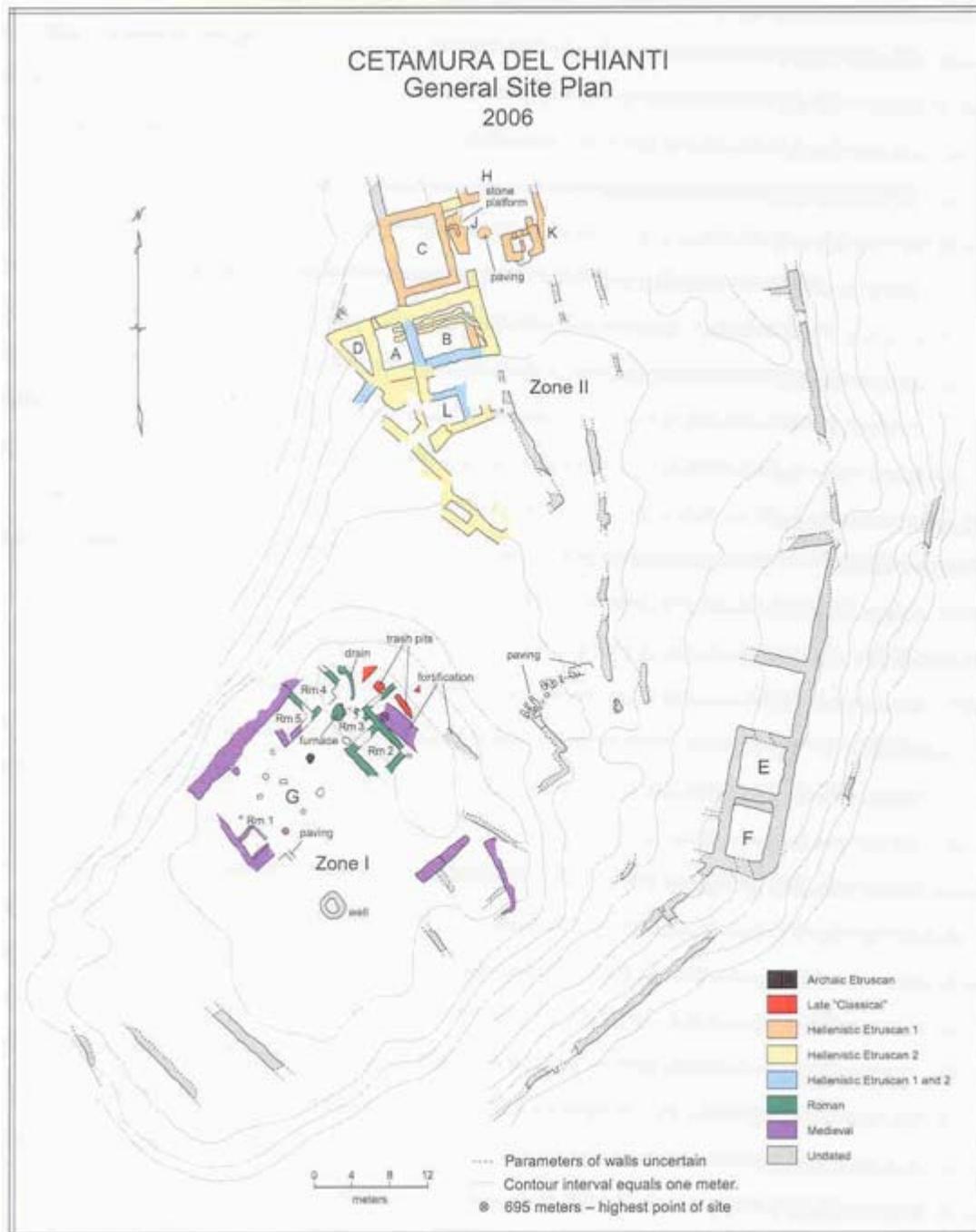


Fig. 1. Cetamura del Chianti, General site plan

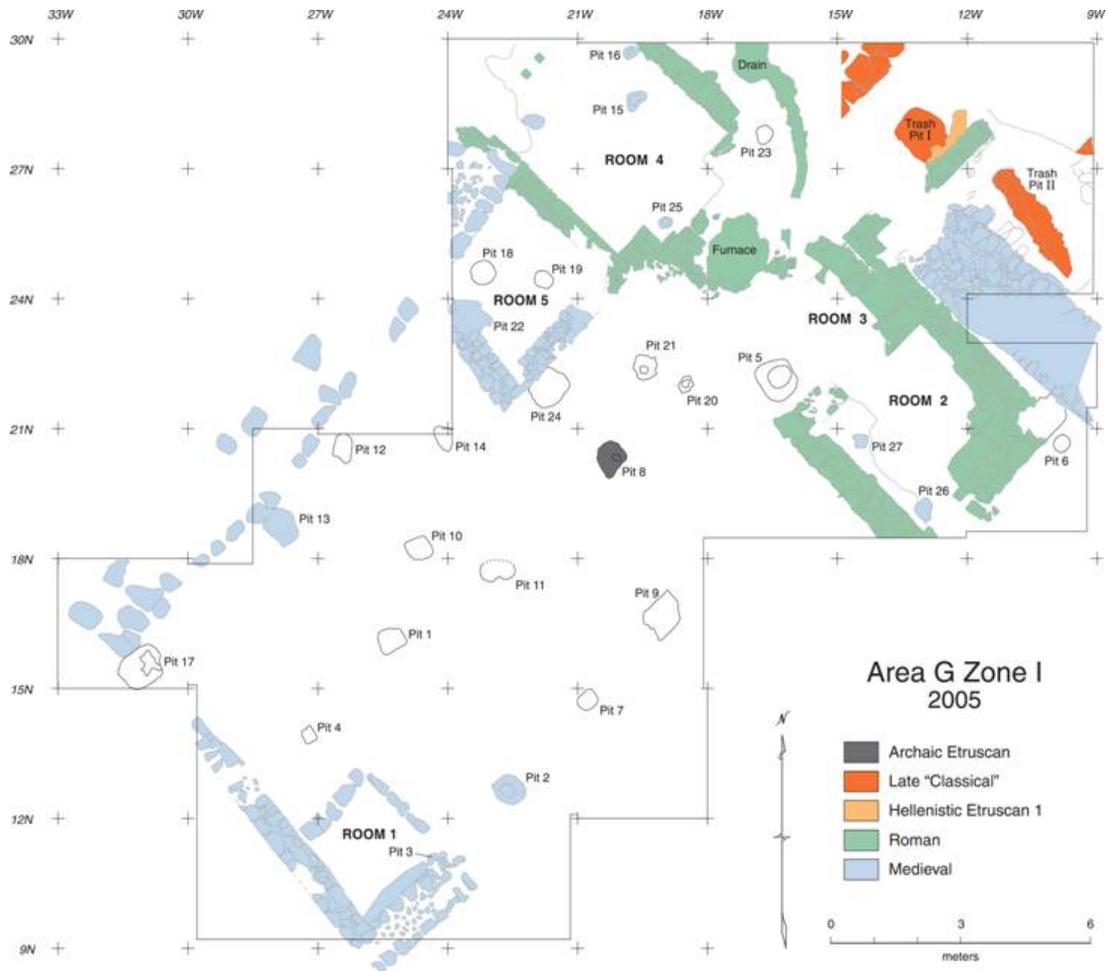


Fig. 2. Zone I, Area G

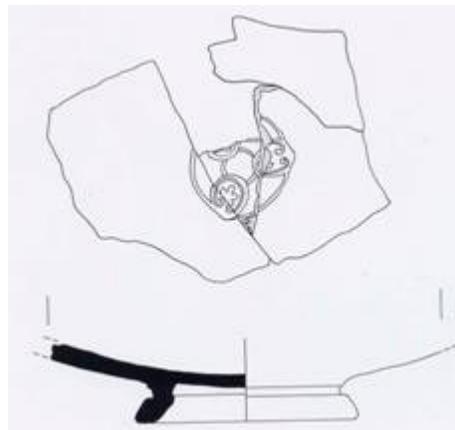


Fig. 3. Bucchero Saucer



Fig. 4. The Well, Zone I



Fig. 5. The Well, Zone I, vaulted roof



Fig. 6. Well- head, found in the well



Fig. 7. Roman Baths, Rooms 2 and 3; Medieval fortification in the background; View from the south



Fig. 8. Overall view of Baths



Fig. 9. Objects from the area of the Roman Baths



Fig. 10. Gaming board (?) and gaming pieces



Fig. 11. Medieval fortifications, view from the north

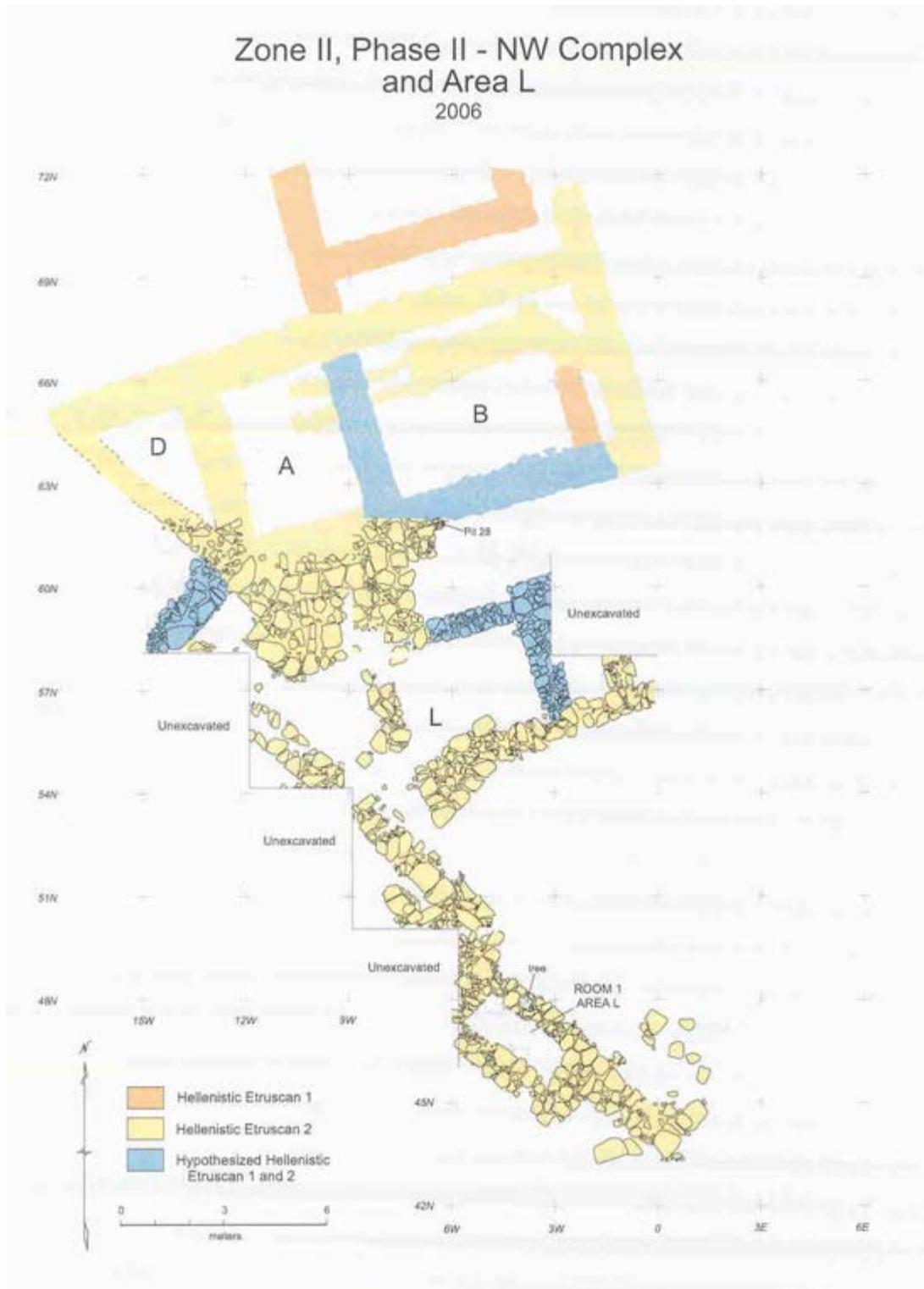


Fig. 12. Zone II, NW Complex and Area L



Fig. 13. Structure K, the Etruscan kiln; view from the north



Fig. 14. Refractory brick found near Structure K



Fig. 15. Structure A; view from the south



Fig. 16. Structure B; view of drain



Fig. 17. Structure C; view from south



Fig. 18. Spindle whorl, loom weight and spool



Fig. 19. Etruscan black-gloss pyxis.



Fig. 20. Etruscan red-gloss from Volterra, with inscription LAUSINI



Fig. 21. Etruscan glass bead



Fig. 22. Etruscan black-gloss *patera*



Fig. 23. Etruscan black-gloss votive cup