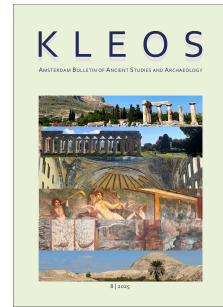




# KLEOS

AMSTERDAM BULLETIN OF ANCIENT STUDIES AND ARCHAEOLOGY



Issue 8, 2025

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## INFORMATION ON PUBLICATION

Full Title: The Sarcophagus of the Priest. Etruscan-Punic interaction in 4th century BCE Tarquinia

Author: Lucy Visser and Dirk Vervenne

Published: Kleos - Amsterdam Bulletin of Ancient Studies and Archaeology/Issue 8/October 2025

Pages: 8-22

ISSN: 2468-1555

[Link to these articles: www.Kleos-bulletin.nl](http://www.Kleos-bulletin.nl)

## RECOMMENDED CITATION:

Visser, L./D. Vervenne, 2025: The Sarcophagus of the Priest. Etruscan-Punic interaction in 4th century BCE Tarquinia, *Kleos - Amsterdam Bulletin of Ancient Studies and Archaeology* 8, 8-22

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# The Sarcophagus of the Priest

## Etruscan-Punic interaction in 4th century BCE

### Tarquinia

Lucy Visser  
Dirk Vervenne

#### ABSTRACT

The sarcophagus of Laris Partiuinus, better known as the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest', is a unique example of a Carthaginian sarcophagus that was imported to Tarquinia, Etruria, and adapted to the Etruscan funerary context. The sarcophagus is nearly identical to a sarcophagus found at Carthage, and the figure carved on the lid is depicted with a recognisably Carthaginian gesture and dress. At the same time, the painted mythological scenes in the Etruscan style depicted on the sarcophagus, the incorporation of funerary portraiture, as well as inscriptions in Etruscan, firmly root it in Etruscan funerary traditions.

In this paper, we analyse the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest' in the context of cultural exchange between Carthaginian and Etruscan elites, and the creation of shared meanings and practices as a result of their interaction. By examining both the Carthaginian and Etruscan elements present on the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest', this paper suggests the sarcophagus is essentially a new, mutually understandable expression of Etruscan and Carthaginian material culture, created through a process of cultural interaction. The sarcophagus is thus a unique and prominent example of the shared meanings and practices created in the context of elite Etruscan-Carthaginian exchange.

#### INTRODUCTION

The 'Sarcophagus of the Priest' is a unique example of a Carthaginian funerary object that was imported to Tarquinia, Etruria, and adapted to the Etruscan funerary context. The sarcophagus was found in the Monterozzi necropolis of Tarquinia in 1876 and is currently held in the *Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia*.<sup>1</sup> It can be tentatively dated to the second half of the 4th

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► [Profile page](#)

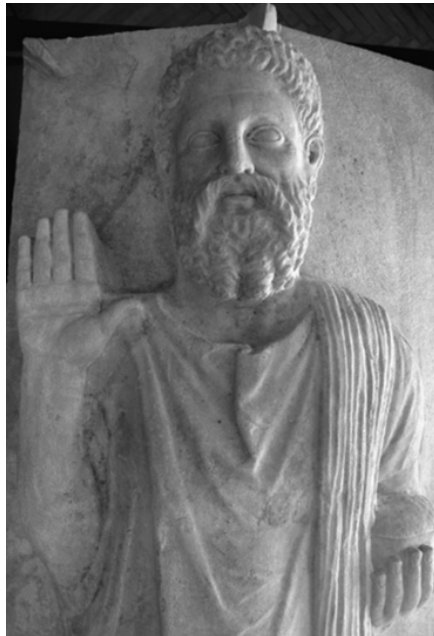
*Dirk Vervenne studied history at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, where he concluded the master Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean Worlds with the thesis Signs of Carthage. Carthaginian self-presentation on stelae and coinage. His research focuses on the history and material culture of Carthage, with a particular interest in Carthaginian coinage. Dirk is also the co-editor of the Dutch language volume Carthago. Ooit verwoest, nooit verdwenen.*

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<sup>1</sup> Chiesa 2005, 323-324; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Macintosh Turfa 1986, 66-91; Mahy 2010, 53-75; Rönningberg 2017b, 93-114. *Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia*, Inv. Nr. RC 9871.

century BCE.<sup>2</sup>

Three Etruscan inscriptions on the sarcophagus identify the occupant as a certain Laris Partiuus, a typical Etruscan name.<sup>3</sup> The sarcophagus, made of white Parian marble, is carved on the lid, depicting a bearded male in Carthaginian dress, holding a *pyxis* in his left hand and raising his right hand in a sacerdotal gesture (see Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> The incorporation of the *pyxis* has led some scholars to identify the figure as a priest, hence the name 'Sarcophagus of the Priest'.<sup>5</sup> The sides of the sarcophagus were later decorated in the Etruscan style with mythological scenes.<sup>6</sup> One long side and both short sides depict scenes of the Amazonomachy, the other long side is dedicated to the sacrifice of the Trojan prisoners of war by Achilles—motifs commonly depicted in contemporary Etruscan tombs, such as on the 'Sarcophagus of the Amazons', also from Tarquinia, as well as the François Tomb in Vulci.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1.**

*Detail of the sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia (after Fentress 2013, 162).*

<sup>2</sup> Chiesa 2005, 323-324; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Mahy 2010, 53-75; Meer, van der 2001, 79-100.

<sup>3</sup> The name Laris Partiuus is inscribed three times on this sarcophagus, once on the lid and twice on the sarcophagus itself: [la]ris: partiunu / l[aris: part]iuus / laris partiuus. Garin 2010, 13; Mahy 2010, 53-75; CIE 5422.

<sup>4</sup> Fentress 2013, 157-178; Maes 1989, 15-24; Rönnberg 2017a 84-105.

<sup>5</sup> Crouzet 2004, 15; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Mahy 2010, 53-75.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'Etruscan' is Roman in origin and was used to refer to a collection of cities in northern and central Italy that shared a language, religion and (at times) formed a military/political coalition. It is important to note that the Etruscans do not constitute a homogenous group, but were competing states that shared cultural practices. In this article, we will refer to the Etruscans when applicable to (the majority of) the cultural group. For more on this, see Becker 2013. As the sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus was found in Tarquinia, we will refer to this city specifically if applicable.

<sup>7</sup> Blanck 1982, 11-28; Bocci 1960, 109-125; Krauskopf 2006, 66-89; 76; Meer, van der 2001, 79-100; 91; Steuernagel 1998, 20.

The sarcophagus was found in a tomb chamber containing one cinerary urn and fourteen sarcophagi, of which two were of white Parian marble.<sup>8</sup> Inscriptions found within the tomb identified it as a family tomb, belonging to the Partunu family.<sup>9</sup> Because there is some variation in the spelling of the surname amongst inscriptions found in the so-called Partunu family tomb, some scholars have used 'partunus' or 'partunu', while others have opted for the more ambiguous 'part(i)unus'.<sup>10</sup> We will use 'Partiunus' to refer to the individual occupant of the sarcophagus discussed here, since 'Partiunus' most closely fits with the inscriptions found on the sarcophagus in question, and use 'Partunu' to refer to the family tomb in which the sarcophagus was found.

In this paper, we analyse the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest' in the context of cultural exchange between Carthaginian and Etruscan elites, and the creation of shared meanings and practices as a result of their interaction. We will examine the Carthaginian elements present on the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest', followed by an analysis of the Etruscan elements. In doing so, we argue that the sarcophagus displays clear Carthaginian features that would have been recognisable as such to contemporary Etruscan viewers. At the same time, it fits closely with Etruscan funerary traditions and was intentionally further integrated into these traditions through the addition of mythological paintings rendered in a distinctly Etruscan style. The sarcophagus is thus a unique object that would have been understandable to both a Carthaginian and an Etruscan audience, and a prominent example of the shared meanings and practices created in the context of elite Etruscan-Carthaginian exchange.

## HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION OF THE SARCOPHAGUS

Since its discovery in 1876, the sarcophagus has been intensely studied, with a historiography so extensive that it is beyond the scope of this study to present it fully.<sup>11</sup> Broadly speaking, however, two distinct historiographical traditions can be identified. The first historiographical tradition tends to focus on the Tarquinian funerary context of the sarcophagus and the painted decorations applied to the sides. This tradition is firmly situated within scholarly discourse on Etruscan art and funerary culture. As such,

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8 Macintosh Turfa 1986, 66-91; Mahy 2010, 53-75. One of the white marble sarcophagi is the 'Sarcophagus of the Priest', of Laris Partiunus, discussed here. The other white marble sarcophagus belonged to a certain Velthur Partunus and is often referred to as the 'Sarcophagus of the Magnate'.

9 Cataldi 1988; Chiesa 2005, 323-324; Macintosh Turfa 1986, 66-91; Mahy 2010, 53-75.

10 Garin 2010, 13; Mahy 2010, 53-75; CIE 5422.

11 For a more extensive historiography on the sarcophagus, see: Herbig 1952; Mahy 2010; Meer, van der 2001.

the sarcophagus is often included in studies of Etruscan stone sarcophagi or studies of mythological depictions in Etruscan art.<sup>12</sup> The second historiographical tradition on the sarcophagus presents the sarcophagus in the context of Etruscan and Carthaginian interaction. The similarity of the sarcophagus from Tarquinia to marble sarcophagi from Carthage, first noted by P. Gauckler in 1909, makes a Carthaginian origin for the sarcophagus highly likely.<sup>13</sup> As such, the sarcophagus has often been cited as evidence of interaction and exchange between Etruscans and Carthaginians in the 4th century BCE.<sup>14</sup> For example, the sarcophagus was included in this way by J. Macintosh Turfa in 1977, who was the first to compile a list of all available evidence for Etruscan-Punic interaction.<sup>15</sup> More recently, this position has been represented by E. Fentress, who convincingly argues that Laris Partiuus likely was an Etruscan trader at Carthage, connecting the presence of this Carthaginian object in Etruria to the international network of elite merchants of this period in the western Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup>

A synthesis of these two historiographical traditions, namely including both an analysis of the Etruscan funerary context and iconography of the sarcophagus, as well as its significance in the context of Etruscan and Carthaginian interaction, has so far been largely lacking, an important exception being the research on the sarcophagus conducted by C. Mahy.<sup>17</sup> Mahy provides an analysis of the physical and stylistic characteristics of the sarcophagus and concludes that the sarcophagus was likely created in Carthage for Laris Partiuus and, at some point, was brought home with him to Tarquinia.<sup>18</sup> An analysis of the cultural significance of the distinct Carthaginian and Etruscan elements on the sarcophagus, including its Carthaginian features and origin, was not present in Mahy's study.

## CARTHAGINIAN FEATURES

The sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus has several elements which can be characterised as typically Carthaginian. More specifically, the gesture and the dress of the figure depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus stand out.<sup>19</sup> The main argument for a Carthaginian

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12 See, for example: Herbig 1952; Krauskopf 1974; Meer, van der 2001; Riedmann 2019; Steuernagel 1998.

13 Gauckler, 1909; Mahy 2010, 53-75.

14 Crouzet 2004; Fentress 2013; Macintosh Turfa 1977; Rönberg 2017b.

15 Macintosh Turfa 1977, 368-374.

16 Fentress 2013, 157-178.

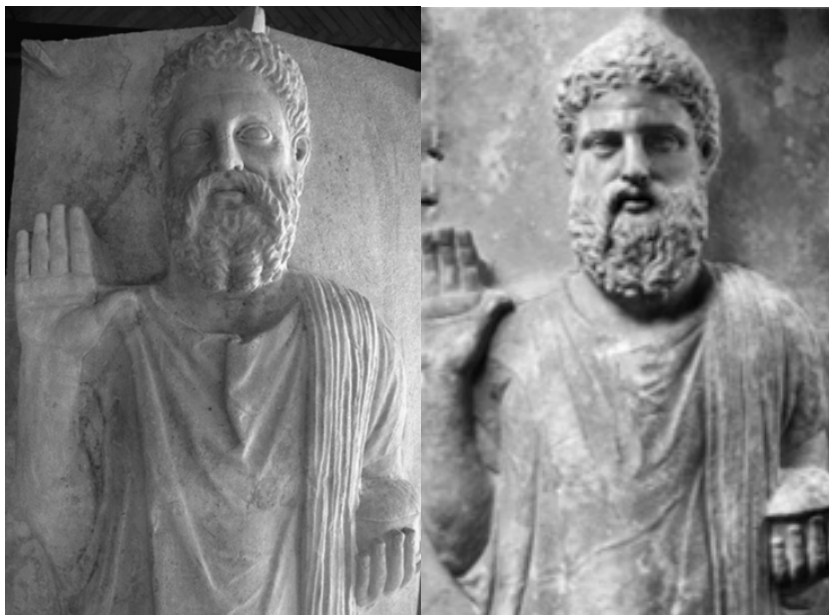
17 Mahy 2010, 53-75.

18 Mahy 2010, 53-75.

19 Maes 1989, 15-24; Michelau 2016, 137-158; Vervenne 2021, 14-18.

origin of the sarcophagus is its strong similarity to another sarcophagus found in 1902-1903 in the necropolis of Sainte Monique, in Carthage, and that is currently held at the Louvre (see Figure 2).<sup>20</sup> Both sarcophagi depict bearded men in the Hellenistic style, wearing long tunics, and holding a *pyxis* in their left hand and raising their right hand with the palm outstretched in a gesture of supplication.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, both sarcophagi are made of the same material, white Parian marble, and can be dated to the same period.<sup>22</sup> This similarity has led scholars to conclude that the same workshop in Carthage may have made both sarcophagi.<sup>23</sup> There is clear agreement among scholars that a Carthaginian origin for the sarcophagus is likely.<sup>24</sup>

The raised right hand of the figure depicted on the sarcophagus, with the palm facing up, is a common symbol of prayer or supplication in Carthaginian religious iconography.<sup>25</sup> This gesture is an almost ubiquitous symbol of worship in the Phoenician and Punic world, and is depicted frequently on stelae from the Carthaginian *tophet* as well as on stelae from Tyre—either naturalistically, as part of a portrait (like on these sarcophagi), or symbolically, as a disembodied right hand.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the gesture and pose of the figure depicted on the sarcophagus are distinctly different from the typically Etruscan



**Figure 2.**

*On the left, a detail of the sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus, found in Tarquinia (after Fentress 2013, 162). On the right, a detail of a sarcophagus found in the Carthaginian necropolis of Sainte Monique (Musée du Louvre, photograph by T. Ollivier, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/clo10118508>).*

<sup>20</sup> Crouzet 2004, 15; Rubio González/Martín Martín 2018, 121-134; Louvre, Inv. Nr. MND800, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/clo10118508>

<sup>21</sup> Michelau 2016, 137-158.

<sup>22</sup> Crouzet 2004, 15; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Rubio González/Martín Martín 2018, 121-134.

<sup>23</sup> Crouzet 2004, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Crouzet 2004, 15; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Mahy 2010, 53-75; Rönnerberg 2017b, 93-114.

<sup>25</sup> Michelau 2016, 137-158; Vervenne 2021, 14-18.

<sup>26</sup> Bisi 1967; Doak 2015, 115-119; Michelau 2016, 137-158; Vervenne 2021, 14-18.



**Figure 3.**

*The 'Sarcophagus of the Magnate' of Velthur Partunus, found in the Partunu family tomb in Tarquinia, 330-300 BCE. See also: Meer, van der, 2001 (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, Inv. Nr. RC 9873, CIE 5423. Image: Alinari Archives, Brogi Archive, Florence.)*

'banquet style', which depicts the deceased reclining as if at a symposium—compare, for example, the 'Sarcophagus of the Magnate', also found in the Partunu family tomb and from a similar time period (see Figure 3).<sup>27</sup>

The figure depicted on the sarcophagus of Laris Partunus wears a long tunic and earrings, which can also be characterised as typically Carthaginian. Contemporary iconographical evidence from Carthage, such as portraiture on decorated stone stelae or decorated shaving razors, suggests that this type of long, flowing tunic worn without a girdle was common in Carthage.<sup>28</sup>

There are some rare mentions of Carthaginian dress by classical authors, most notably Plautus writing in the 2nd century BCE, which reinforce the image of a long tunic and earrings being typically Carthaginian.<sup>29</sup> The literary evidence must be interpreted critically, however, due to the late dating of the literary sources and the tendency of Greek and Roman authors to attribute elements or concepts from their own culture to the Carthaginian context.<sup>30</sup> However, evidence from Carthage also testifies to the popularity of earrings among both men and women. Masks and glass pendants found in Carthage, dating to the 4th and 3rd century BCE, almost universally portray faces with either pierced ears or earrings.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the large number of earrings found interred in the Carthaginian necropolises of Saint-Monique,

<sup>27</sup> Krauskopf 2006, 70-71; Meer, van der 2001, 79-100. *Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia*, 15-24.

<sup>28</sup> Maes 1989, 15-24.

<sup>29</sup> Fentress 2013, 157-178; Franko 1996, 425-452; Maes 1989, 15-24; Plautus, *Poenulus* 5.2.

<sup>30</sup> Maes 1989, 15-24.

<sup>31</sup> Lancel 2012, 46-56.

Douimès, Dermech and the Byrsa further attests to their popularity.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is safe to characterise these features on the sarcophagus as an example of typical Carthaginian fashion. Thus, the clothing worn by the figure depicted on the sarcophagus matches a style of clothing worn in Carthage at the time.

## ETRUSCAN FEATURES

At the same time, the sarcophagus adheres to Etruscan funerary traditions. As mentioned above, the sarcophagus was interred in the Partunu family tomb.<sup>33</sup> Burying loved ones in sarcophagi or depositing cremated remains in cinerary urns and placing them in family tombs was a long-held Etruscan tradition, dating back to the Orientalizing period (750–650 BCE).<sup>34</sup> Traditionally, family tombs consisted of several different interconnected chambers and were often in use for several generations. The use of cinerary urns and sarcophagi, for a large part, depends on time and place. However, a larger number of cinerary urns were found in comparison to the extant number of sarcophagi.<sup>35</sup> In the Tarquinian necropolis in which the sarcophagus of Laris Partianus was found, both cinerary urns and sarcophagi were used. These seem to have been in use contemporaneously, specifically in the Hellenistic period, during which time Laris Partianus was entombed.<sup>36</sup> V. Zanoni states that in the section of the Monterozzi necropolis, the duality of urns and sarcophagi seems to reflect familial tradition or preference.<sup>37</sup> I. Krauskopf states: “The simultaneous use of cremation and inhumation shows that there was obviously leeway for individual preferences in Etruscan burial practices.”<sup>38</sup> This helps us make sense of the single cinerary urn found in the Partunu family tomb: while it may seem out of place at first, it seems to reflect a broader tendency in Etruscan funerary practice. Krauskopf also notes: “At different times and different places, one or the other method of burial predominates; there are, however, exceptions observable everywhere.”<sup>39</sup> The use of a sarcophagus for Laris Patriunus is interesting when considering Zanoni’s assertion that the biggest indicator for the choice between sarcophagi and cinerary urns was family tradition and

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32 Bénichou-Safar 1982, 246-261; Delattre 1895, 17-19; Gauckler 1900, 294; Lancel 2012, 46-56.

33 Meer, van der, 2001, 79-100.

34 The earliest forms of portraiture have been found dating back to the 7th century BCE, tombs containing urns and sarcophagi have been found dating from the Orientalizing period (750-650 BCE), see: Carpino 2013, 1009-1010; Sannibale 2013, 121-122.

35 Steingraber 2016, 146-148.

36 Zanoni 2019, 86.

37 Zanoni 2019, 86.

38 Krauskopf 2006, 66-67. For a comprehensive analysis of inhumation and cremation in Tarquinia, see de la Genière 1987.

39 Krauskopf 2006, 66.

preference, as it was found alongside thirteen other sarcophagi.<sup>40</sup> One could therefore conclude that the choice for inhumation in a sarcophagus seems to have been in line with the preferences and traditions of the Partunu family.

Another distinct difference is in the positioning of the figure on the lid. Etruscan funerary styles, both urns and sarcophagi, present the deceased in what is called the 'banquet style'. This entails a reclining posture, often with an elbow resting on a pillow, and laying on their side (see Figure 3).<sup>41</sup> The banquet style must be understood within the function of the tomb: a place to come and celebrate with the deceased, with the tomb as the antechamber to the underworld. Ceremonial fights, games and music were often part of these celebrations. To have a figure in such a different pose must have stood out as foreign to contemporary Etruscan visitors to the tomb.

Despite the differences in size and content (i.e., ashes or physical remains), the sarcophagi and urns have similar functions, which is evident in their decoration.<sup>42</sup> Both were frequently decorated with mythological scenes, carved in relief or painted on the chest of the sarcophagus or cinerary urn, most commonly depictions of funerary processions leading to the afterlife and decorative patterns or stories from Greek mythology.<sup>43</sup> Many of the Greek myths are set in different parts of the Mediterranean, such as the story of Daedalus (Taitale), who flies as far as Sardinia, which was for a time held by the Etruscans and very much part of their sphere of influence.<sup>44</sup> Many of the scenes featured in Etruscan funerary art seem to have a connection to loss and death, such as those that depict the death of the brothers before the gates of Thebes in the famous "Seven against Thebes". This theme is often repeated.<sup>45</sup> On the sarcophagus of Laris Patriunus, a depiction of the Amazonomachy and the sacrifice of Trojan prisoners of war from the Iliad is visible (see Figure 4). This scene is most prevalent in Etruscan art on sarcophagi during the second half of the 4th century BCE.<sup>46</sup>

Other myths, such as the journey of Odysseus across the Mediterranean, seem to fit the Etruscan idea of the journey the

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<sup>40</sup> Zanoni 2019, 86.

<sup>41</sup> Krauskopf 2006, 70-71.

<sup>42</sup> See: Krauskopf 2006; Simon 2013; Zanoni 2019, 86. The practices change over time and vary in different geographical locations.

<sup>43</sup> Krauskopf 2006, 67-68, Krauskopf 1974, 133-137: incorporation of Greek myths in Etruscan art can be seen from the 7th century BCE onwards. These scenes incorporate the Trojan cycle, the Odyssey, as well as stories about Thebes.

<sup>44</sup> Simon 2013, 495-6.

<sup>45</sup> Krauskopf 1974; Simon 2013, 508.

<sup>46</sup> Riedemann 2019, 11.



**Figure 4.**

*Detail of the sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus depicting the sacrifice of Trojan prisoners of war, Museo Archeologico Nazionale Di Tarquinia (photograph by P. Lemaire).*

deceased would have to make to get to the Underworld, a scene itself visible on urns and sarcophagi.<sup>47</sup> In the use of these scenes, Etruscan artists often added figures representing a *daímon* in the shape of a winged figure, who could help or hinder the deceased on their journey.<sup>48</sup> On this sarcophagus of Laris Partiuus, the figure on the left in the dark robe and possible wings stands out, and could depict fate.<sup>49</sup>

One of the most notable aspects of Etruscan funerary art is the portrayal of individual features of the deceased person, which sets it apart from other funerary portraiture.<sup>50</sup> Of the over 5000 Etruscan urns and sarcophagi found, none seem to have the same facial features. This suggests the importance of remembering the individual characteristics of the deceased in Etruscan funerary art.<sup>51</sup> This lifelike depiction served to evoke the memory and continued presence of the deceased, both during funerary rituals and when family members visited the tomb to honour and remember them.<sup>52</sup> It is interesting that this very Etruscan aspect does not seem to apply to the sarcophagus studied here. As noted, the facial features are the same as those of other Carthaginian Sarcophagi found. In this sense, the portraiture aspect seems different. This

<sup>47</sup> Cinerary urn H III C, in possession of the *Rijksmuseum van Oudheden* in Leiden, is an example of a cinerary urn found in Volterra, depicting Odysseus fleeing the island of the Cyclops. An example of a processional sarcophagus is the "Magistrate's Sarcophagus" (Cat. 14950, *Musei Vaticani*), of which only the bottom was found with an inscription detailing the accomplishments of the rather young man it had belonged to, and showing the deceased in a chariot, on his way to the underworld.

<sup>48</sup> Simon 2013, 508.

<sup>49</sup> Though this identification is not absolute, the fact that this is the only white figure (signifying it as female), wearing a typical helmet, an object which could be a shield, and wings, seems to point to Vanth, the most often named and seen figure in this type of imagery.

<sup>50</sup> Carpino 2013, 1007-1009.

<sup>51</sup> Carpino 2013, 1009; Nielsen 2013, 181.

<sup>52</sup> Carpino 2013, 1009.

may mean that it could not be understood as a portrait in the Etruscan tradition. However, as the sarcophagus was placed in the tomb, the centre for worship, it does not seem to have been enough to exclude it. It might even have been considered a representation of the characteristics of the deceased, embedded in Etruscan elements.

The *pyxis* held by the figure carved on the lid of the sarcophagus also fits Etruscan traditions of funerary portraiture on urns and sarcophagi, where men often—though not always—hold sacrificial items, such as a *phiale* or *pyxis*.<sup>53</sup>

### PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The sarcophagus combines a variety of both Carthaginian and Etruscan elements and fits both with Carthaginian elite funerary practices as well as local Etruscan elite funerary traditions. It was created in Carthage and transported to Etruria, where the decorations on the base of the sarcophagus were added, before it was used to hold the remains of Laris Partianus and interred in the necropolis of Tarquinia.

As the sarcophagus was made in Carthage and the figure on the lid is depicted in Carthaginian style, the sarcophagus likely stood out as foreign to a contemporary Etruscan audience. The pose of the figure on the lid is distinctly different from the banquet style used in Etruria, where, during the Hellenistic period, figures were portrayed in a reclining posture, often leaning on a pillow.<sup>54</sup> The style and foreignness of the sarcophagus may have been seen as rich, an expensive imported luxury product, which was known and understood to be Carthaginian. The combination of the atypical lid and a more typical painted bottom, therefore, must have been an interesting sight, understood as a mingling of two different funerary traditions.

There is a long history of exchange between Carthaginians and Etruscans around the Tyrrhenian basin. The emporia of Gravisca, near Tarquinia, and Pyrgi, near Caere, played an important role in the facilitation of trade and exchange between Carthaginian and Etruscan elites.<sup>55</sup> Several objects attest to the familial or community ties that were established in the context of this exchange. A prominent example of this is the remarkable discovery of the multilingual Etruscan-Phoenician plates of Pyrgi in 1964, which commemorate a joint dedication of a sanctuary to Uni-Astarte on behalf of the people of Caere and the

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<sup>53</sup> Women hold a more varied array of objects, ranging from fans to pomegranates. See for more descriptions: Nielsen 2013

<sup>54</sup> Krauskopf 2006, 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> Demetriou 2021, 64-104; Fentress 2013, 157-178.



**Figure 5.**  
*Gold plates with inscriptions in Etruscan and Phoenician, from Pyrgi (Santa Severa). Rome, National Etruscan Museum in Villa Giulia (after Xella/Zamora López 2019, 115).*

Carthaginians (see Figure 5).<sup>56</sup> A 6th-century BCE ivory tessera hospitalis, a token of guest-friendship, found in the necropolis of Carthage but carrying inscriptions in Etruscan, further attests to the long history of contact between Carthaginian and Etruscan elites.<sup>57</sup> While the emporia of Gravisca and Pyrgi seem to have lost that function around the middle of the 5th century BCE, the sarcophagus of Laris Partianus, dated to the second half of the 4th century BCE, suggests that economic and cultural ties between Carthage and Etruscan Tarquinia persisted.<sup>58</sup> As an imported Carthaginian luxury funerary object, the sarcophagus of Laris Partianus is a more recent example of exchange and personal contacts between Carthaginian and Etruscan elites.

As already convincingly argued by Fentress, Laris Partianus was likely an Etruscan aristocrat who worked as a merchant and who may have lived at Carthage for a time.<sup>59</sup> While at Carthage, Laris would have dressed as a Carthaginian to fit in with the Carthaginian elite. At home in Etruria, his knowledge of foreign cultures and markets may have been a source of pride. An imported Carthaginian sarcophagus would have served as a permanent reminder of the wealth that Laris commanded and his affinity with the Punic city. The portrait on the sarcophagus, however, could still function as a portrait of Laris in Punic dress: the figure depicted on the lid could still be understood as a representation of the deceased, despite the difference in style compared to contemporary Etruscan funerary portraiture. The

<sup>56</sup> Botto 2021, 149-150; Camporeale 2015, 67-86; Vella 2014, 24-41; Xella and Zamora López 2019, 114-116.

<sup>57</sup> Camporeale 2015, 67-86; Russo 117.

<sup>58</sup> Chiesa 2005, 323-324; Fentress 2013, 157-178; Mahy 2010, 53-75; Meer, van der 2001, 79-100.

<sup>59</sup> Fentress 2013, 157-178.

*pyxis* would have been a recognisable reference to a priestly function, as the Etruscan practice in this regard was similar. The paintings added in the Etruscan style, with their depictions of mythological scenes, further embedded the sarcophagus in the Etruscan funerary traditions. The sarcophagus is thus a uniquely 'bilingual' object, that would have been recognisable by both a Carthaginian as well as an Etruscan audience.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 'Sarcophagus of the Priest' shows an interesting mixture of styles, both Etruscan and Carthaginian, which shows that an object that was clearly foreign in origin could still be integrated and used in an Etruscan funerary context. The sarcophagus cannot be exclusively identified as Etruscan or Carthaginian, as in a way it is both: the sarcophagus is essentially a new, mutually understandable expression of Etruscan and Carthaginian material culture, created through a creative process of cultural interaction. Therefore, the sarcophagus of Laris Partiuinus is a remarkable visual representation of the shared meanings and practices created in the context of Etruscan-Carthaginian elite exchange, and thus further helps us to understand both cultures and their interactions.

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