

A Globolo Gems

Late Etrusco-Italic Scarab Intaglios

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av

Ulf Hansson
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Abstract

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The study treats a class of engraved scarab gems commonly known by the name of *a globolo*, produced in Central Italy in the Late Classical to Early Hellenistic periods. The point of departure is a newly developed database of all known specimens, which amount to 1,470, covering a wide range of information categories, which have guided the structure of the presentation. The aim is to offer a more complete documentation in order to better expose an important material category previously neglected by archaeologists and historians of ancient art. The study includes a critical survey of find locations and available provenance information, with further discussions on geographical distribution, archaeological find contexts and chronology. Large concentrations of find gems in non-Etruscan territories of the Italian peninsula indicate that production and consumption were not restricted to the Etruscan sphere, but included Latin, Italic, and other, South Italian elements as well. A peak in production is witnessed c. 325-275 BCE. Materials and engraving techniques are presented and discussed, as are gemstone typologies, device images and mounts. The iconography of the gem devices is examined with special regard to formal structure and recurring figure types. Various problems pertaining to the interpretation of subject-matter are problematised, after which follows a survey of mythological and generic motifs. The question of originality and dependency is considered with respect to earlier and contemporary glyptic styles and other artistic media, notably vase-painting. The study further includes sections on workshops, craftsmen and user groups, with an emphasis on the functions and cultural significance of the items. The specific characteristics of the *a globolo* scarabs are examined with respect to production and consumption, with the wider scope of providing a comprehensive picture covering several aspects, thus facilitating the integration of the material into the study of Etruscan and Italic culture in general. The investigation of thematic structure in relation to meaning gives emphasis to the social aspects of the material, providing information about the self-image and religious beliefs of the bearers. Finally, the study includes a complete list of all known *a globolo* scarabs in public and private collections.

Keywords: Etruscan, Etrusco-Italic, a globolo, scarab, engraved gem, glyptic, engraving technique, archaeogemmology, archaeology, find context, typology, iconography, standardisation, serial production, consumption, auto-representation