

# The Regolini Galassi tomb

► The Etruscan Italic Department continues in its tradition of presenting several projects of the very important Regolini Galassi Tomb, discovered in 1836 during archaeological excavations in Cerveteri. The tomb takes its name from the Archpriest of Cerveteri Regolini and the General Galassi who found the tomb.

This tomb was one of the richest burial sites ever found in Etruria and the Eastern Mediterranean region. The king from the ancient Etruscan city of "Caere" was buried in this tomb and thus the tomb holds a rich variety of gold, silver and bronze artifacts related to detailed ceremonial and symbolic rituals. All of the various elements which we explain in the following paragraphs were unearthed among the 250 pieces found in the tomb.

Of particular significance is the series of eleven bronze ribbed paterae, originally placed along the walls of the tomb. These ceremonial bowls of Oriental origin were used in entombment rituals of the royal class to indicate their social ranking. They also were thought to serve the dead and their ancestors in regal banquets which they would undoubtedly enjoy in the afterlife.

Archaeologists also found a single beautiful bronze basin, which we also present for restoration. The bronze basin of simple biconical appearance and receding borders, is part of the rich collection of bronze vases discovered in the location of the Regolini Galassi Tomb.

We would also like to highlight another collection of ten bronze basins, which were used for "ritual" purposes. The same type of basins were also found in several areas of Italy, such as Piceno, southern Italy, as well as ancient sanctuaries in Greece (Olympia, Corfu, Perachora, Isthmia) and in Ireland as well, making them of particular importance. This collection is truly remarkable for its widespread use!

The importance of the Regolini Galassi tomb is also evidenced by a lebete, a rounded vase made of a single piece of metal. Five small figures of lions decorate its base. The lions were formed through a fusion process and subsequently detailed with embossment and chisel. The incomplete tripod base is made of iron. Lebeti like this one were very common in Etruria around 720-580 B.C., a period greatly influenced by Oriental styles. The lebeti were mainly used during banquets by aristocratic families. However, the ancestors of the Etruscan lebeti were found in northern Syria and Urartu (Republic of Armenia) and were the very first prototypes created and exported to the west through Greece. The original lebete used to be decorated with lion and griffon protoma.

All these fascinating grave artifacts (paterae, bronze basins and lebete) were used in ceremonial banquets adopted by Etruscan princes and their courts. It appears that they borrowed this funerary practice from the legacy of the Greek heroes as narrated in Homer's epic poems which he composed during the same years this tomb was in use.