

The exceptionally intensive use of inscriptions is one of the most striking features of the funerary habit of the Etruscan city of Chiusi (and of its territory) in the last two centuries B.C. Nearly 3,000 funerary inscriptions (one tenth of them in Latin) are concentrated in a time-span comprising seven to eight generations, illuminating the history of individual families, their mutual ties, and their position inside the ever-changing elite society of Chiusi.

The chamber tombs were often over-crowded, and a number of small loculi (“*nicchiotti*”) were dug along their *dromoi* in order to increase their capacity. The *nicchiotti* contained usually one cinerary urn (but sometimes two or even three), and were closed by a tile fastened by a thick layer of mortar. Although the use of *nicchiotti* (and of tiles) began around 300 B.C., tiles were first inscribed only one century later, when the funerary habit of Chiusi changed dramatically. In the following centuries, tiles (sometimes inscribed) also could be employed to close the main funerary chambers.

Inscriptions on tiles were written down with a number of different techniques and display a wide variety of letter forms, most of them unparalleled in contemporary epigraphical writing. Moreover, when the name of the same person is inscribed on both a cinerary urn and tile, the two inscriptions are almost always different (in shape of letters, in name formulae, even in orthography). Thus this evidence suggests the involvement of different individuals, probably as a result of (relatively) widespread literacy.

Moreover, the Clusine kilns produced an ill-studied series of oversized tiles (usually called “*tegulae maximae*” by nineteenth-century scholars), most likely intended to be used primarily as tomb-doors, and sometimes inscribed before firing. The present paper will focus on three main topics: (1) an attempt to identify recurrent patterns in letter forms used only on tiles, in order to reconstruct the possible existence of something like an “Etruscan cursive script”; (2) the identification of some significant misspellings in name-forms attested on tiles, and their connection to similar occurrences on cinerary urns, in order to recover some possible evidence of different degrees of literacy; (3) the inscriptions on tiles used to close funerary chambers, and their connections to the urns found within.