

Ivory pendants, plaques, figurines, and furniture inlays were recovered from the debris of the Orientalizing period residence (OC1/Residence) at Poggio Civitate (Murlo). Artisans working in a multifunctional workshop (OC2/Workshop) located at the site produced these artifacts for members of the aristocratic family inhabiting the residence. Among the more remarkable pieces in this collection are seven inscribed artifacts, all fragmentary and burnt black by fire. These artifacts were carved in the shape of animals or human figures. The reverse sides, which were smoothed flat, were incised with inscriptions naming the person who possessed the plaque. They present us with a unique opportunity to contribute to questions of alphabet, orthography, and paleography in Orientalizing period Etruria because they come from the same deposit and it can be dated to ca. 600 BCE. In this paper I argue that there is one orthographic feature on the inscribed ivories that is peculiarly archaic, viz., the spelling of the fricative /f/; that the 'style' of alphabet is the 'northern' variety, one in which sade stands for the dental sibilant /s/ and sigma the palatal sibilant /β/; and that the distinctive features of letters permit us to assign these inscriptions to the 'hands' of two or three artisan's working at the site. I conclude with observations about the function of the inscribed plaques, the spread of writing in Etruria during the Orientalizing period, and possible connections between Poggio Civitate and other sites in the Ager Clusinus.