

## SUMMARY

The »Circolo delle Fibule« is the first of over 25 funerary circles that have been discovered so far in the different areas of the Picene necropolis of Sirolo-Numana (AN). About three quarters of its surface was excavated in spring 1970. The »Circolo« was delimited by a 23.5 m wide circular ditch and contained nine graves with the inhumations of ten individuals (eight single tombs and one tomb with two bodies). After some initial conservation treatments, a selection of the grave goods was temporarily presented in an exhibition at the Museo Civico Archeologico of San Severino Marche (MC) in 1972. Since 1974 – and after a new setup of the permanent exhibition between 2018 and 2022 – part of the grave assemblages are on display in the Antiquarium Statale of Numana. A few preliminary publications reported the discovery and highlighted the huge quantity of fibulae found inside the tombs, as well as the significance of some grave goods and of the funerary circle for the Picene culture. Nevertheless, the context remained unpublished for over 50 years. This book presents the results of a research project and of new conservation treatments carried out since 2015 and contains the full edition of the grave assemblages and an interpretation of the funerary complex. The nine tombs are distributed over a time span of more than one hundred years, dating between the last decades of the phase Piceno III of D. G. Lollini (end of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC) and the end of the phase Piceno IV B (470 BC). The chronology of the tombs and their horizontal stratigraphy are reconstructed only through the associations of the grave goods in the grave assemblages, thus indicating four burial phases. Since the bones of the deceased are not preserved, the identification of gender and age could be hypothesized only on the basis of archaeological parameters (weapons for men; several adornments and spinning and weaving tools for women; grave size and specific types of grave goods for non-adults and infants). For the same reason, it is impossible to prove the existence of any kinship relation between the deceased. Nevertheless, it is likely that they belonged to the same familial group.

Tombs 7 and 11 belong to the first burial phase (625-580 BC). Tomb 7 is the oldest tomb and was placed in the geometric centre of the circle (l. 320 cm × b. 190 cm × depth 150 cm; orientation NE-SW; chronology 625-600 BC). It contained the deposition of an adult male buried with a two-wheeled chariot (**t7.50**), a horse bit (**t7.51**), a panoply of bronze and iron weapons (one helmet [**t7.9**], a dagger [**t7.10** with the belt buckle **t7.11**], four spears [**t7.12-15**], a further throwing weapon [**t7.16**] and two clubs [**t7.22-23**; **t7.23** can be interpreted as a sceptre]), an attire of 70 fibulae (**t7.1-7**), a set of 22 ceramic vessels (**t7.28-49**), four spits (**t7.27.1-4**), two axes (**t7.24**, **t7.54**) and two knives (**t7.25-26**). Tomb 11 (l. 295 cm × b. 147 cm × depth ca. 25 cm; orientation N/NE-S/SW; chronology 600-580 BC) was located to the east of tomb 7. It belonged to an adult female buried with several adornments of bronze, iron, silver, amber, bone and glass, amongst which 402 fibulae stand out (**t11.1-44**). To the grave assemblage belonged also two bronze vessels (cista **t11.45** and a dipper or bowl **t11.46**) and 24 ceramic vessels (**t11.47-70**), three of which were placed in a recess by the NW-corner of the pit. Four spools (**t11.75-78**), two spindle whorls (**t11.79-80**), two spits (**t11.72.1-2**) and a knife (**t11.71**) complete the grave assemblage.

Most of the tombs can be dated in the second burial phase, which corresponds to the phase Piceno IV A (580-520 BC). Among them, tomb 2 especially stands out (l. 350 cm × b. 140 cm × depth 50 cm; orientation NW-SE; chronology 550-525 BC): it belongs to an adult female buried with 409 fibulae and other adornments, in part similar to those of tomb 11 (**t2.1-35**). The vessels include two bronze items (situla **t2.36** and high-handled bowl type *Beckentasse* **t2.37**) and 21 ceramic vases (**t2.39-59**), to which also an Etruscan bucchero *kantharos* (**t2.55**) and a »Samian« *lekythos* (**t2.44**) count. Beside a knife (**t2.60**) and four spools (**t2.61-64**) there are also the remains of a foldable stool with decorations in bronze and bone (**t2.65**).

Tomb 5 (l. 250 cm × b. 140 cm × depth 25 cm; orientation NE-SW; chronology 550-525 BC) was placed north of tomb 2. It hosted the remains of an adult male, buried with his head towards SW. The deceased was buried with 51 fibulae (**t5.1-5**), a panoply of iron weapons (a sword [**t5.7**], a dagger [**t5.8**], a spear [**t5.9-10**] and a throwing weapon [**t5.11**]), a horse bit (**t5.32**), a few utensils (two axes [**t5.12-13**], a knife [**t5.14**] and two spits [**t5.15.1-2**]), and a set of ceramic vessels (**t5.16-31**).

Tomb 8 (l. 200 cm × b. 89 cm × depth 45 cm; orientation N/NE-S/SW; chronology 550-525 BC) belonged to a young female. Beside a rich group of adornments with 238 fibulae (**t8.1-52**), the grave assemblage included 17 ceramic vessels (**t8.54-70**) and one spindle whorl (**t8.53**). Tomb 6 (l. 100 cm × b. 70 cm; orientation NE-SW; chronology 580-525 BC) contained the remains of an infant, most likely a female. Several adornments belonged to the grave assemblage, including 51 fibulae (**t6.1-22**); a small bronze vessel (**t6.23**) and 16 ceramic vessels (**t6.24-39**) were also placed in the tomb.

Only tomb 4 dates to the third burial phase (l. 190 cm × b. 80 cm × depth 60 cm; orientation NE-SW; chronology 525-500 BC). It hosted the remains of an adult male. The individual was buried with a dagger (**t4.4**), a spear (**t4.5**) and an axe (**t4.6**). He owned only two fibulae and a ring (**t4.1-3**), and a simple set of ceramic vessels (**t4.7-20**).

Tombs 9 and 10 date to the last burial phase. Tomb 9 (l. 165 cm × b. 45 cm; orientation SE-NW; chronology 490-470 BC) belonged to a young female, buried with few adornments (**t9.1-9**), two spindle whorls (**t9.10-11**), a set of ceramic vessels (**t9.12-20**) including an Attic black-figure *lekythos* and an Attic black-figure *kalpis* (**t9.12-13**), and a glass *aryballos* (**t9.21**). Tomb 10 (l. 210 cm × b. 85 cm × depth 60 cm; orientation SE-NW; chronology 490-470 BC) belonged to two individuals, an adult male (individual A) and an adult female (individual B). The adult male was buried with three fibulae (**t10.3-5**), two spears (**t10.1-2**) and three stone pebbles (**t10.6**), while the adult female owned nine fibulae (**t10.7-15**) and a glass bead (**t10.16**). The ceramic set was indistinct and included 20 vessels (**t10.17-36**), to which belonged an Attic black-figure *kylix* (**t10.31**).

Considering the position of the tombs in the burial area, it is possible to recognize both a spatial and a chronological alignment between the tombs of adult males with weapons 7, 5 and 4, starting from the centre of the »Circolo«. Next to each of these three tombs there was a female one with a very rich grave assemblage (tombs 11, 2 and 8), suggesting a possible link between these deceased. The infant tomb 6 is more isolated and placed in the northern sector of the circle. Unlike all other tombs, the more recent tombs 9 and 10 are oriented SE-NW. It is probably not by chance that tomb 10 with a man and a woman is placed almost in the middle of the »Circolo«, immediately north of the »couple« buried in tombs 7 and 11. The evidence suggests that great importance was ascribed both to adult males with weapons (a possible hint at a male kinship line?) and, most of all, to female individuals, whose high rank is highlighted by the deposition of enormous numbers of adornments.

The study of the grave goods was organized in a thorough typological collection through single material classes. In general, the data from the grave assemblages of the »Circolo delle Fibule« correspond to what we currently know from other contexts in Picenum and in the central Italic area. A few exceptions confirm, on the one hand, the local character of some objects and, on the other hand, testify both the presence of external influences (mostly from Etruscan-Italic and Greek areas) and of imported goods from Etruria, the northern regions, and the Aegean area. In this sense, some objects are revealing: the foldable stool **t2.65** and the bronze situla **t2.37** are proof of the cultural influences, while the *Beckentasse* **t2.36**, the pottery of Italo-Geometric and Etrusco-Corinthian type from the tombs of the second burial phase, the Etruscan bucchero *kantharos* **t2.55**, the »Samian« *lekythos* **t2.44**, the Attic black-figure vases **t9.12-13** and **t10.31**, and the polychrome glass *aryballos* **t9.21** are clearly imported goods.

Adornments and attire elements should be considered apart. The great number of fibulae found in the grave assemblages (1242 specimens of bronze and iron) are concentrated especially in the tombs 2, 8 and 11 and can be classified in 50 different types. Most belong to types that are characteristic of the so called Adriatic *koinè*, widespread in several Picene contexts. While some types seem to be specific of the local attire (types I.1, I.4, II.3, IV.5), only two fibulae (**t2.8**, iron fibula of type 6 or »Montedinove« and **t9.1**, type IX.1 or *Vogelkopffibel*) can be labelled as clearly foreign and do not find any comparison in Numana. The huge concentration of fibulae must not be considered as proof of an exclusively local production of many types otherwise known for their wide distribution, but it is rather to be interpreted as a specific cultural tradition in the attire of Numana, most likely of ritual character. Also, the main part of the other adornments and attire elements finds good comparisons among the typological range of the Picene material culture. Some exceptions are represented by imported goods (faience adornments [scarab **t6.18** and cowries-shaped pendants **t8.31**] and the bone plaque with engraved decorations **t11.34**). Two polymateric chest ornaments (**t2.23**, **t11.25**) and some unique convex discs with embossed decorations (**t2.24**, **t11.26**) find good comparisons with objects from the »Tomba della Regina« and from other female tombs of the local necropolis.

Concerning the burial custom, the examination of the ceramic finds from the layers of the circular ditch and the documentation of the excavation carried out by D. G. Lollini allowed identification of the presence of ritually fragmented and scattered pottery, according to a custom documented also in other central Italic sites. It was also possible to highlight some differences in the treatment of the bodies and in the distribution of adornments and grave goods in relation to the deceased inside the tombs. This allowed us to recognize four different rituals, probably connected to gender, age and status of the deceased, as well as to chronological and cultural features. Most surprisingly, most of the fibulae of tombs 2 and 11 were placed far away from the bodies, and it is likely that they were originally fixed on supports of perishable material, partially suspended and overlapping other grave goods.

The selection and the distribution of the vessels sets reflect what is already known from other cases in Numana and in other Picene sites. It is relevant to notice – again in tombs 2 and 11 – the presence of big knives found next to animal bone remains (in the case of tomb 11, they were placed in the cista **t11.45**), probably suggesting the execution of sacrifices during the burial ceremony.

Regarding the funerary dress, it is very difficult to reconstruct the attire of the deceased, since the adornments and the garment elements follow highly codified rules and are rarely placed in the same position in which they used to be worn. Nevertheless, it is possible to recognize some peculiar and probably specific elements of the attire of the women from Numana, distinguished by an emphasized conservatism concerning some types of adornments during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, which is evident especially in the rich tombs 2 and 11, as well as in the more recent »Tomba della Regina«.

Despite their limited number, the tombs of the »Circolo delle Fibule« offer an interesting record of the burial customs of the community of Numana between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC; they also provide a cross-section of social history related to a probable familial group of high status, which chose to distinguish itself from the rest of the necropolis by delimiting the funerary area. The peculiar funerary custom and the selection of the grave goods give back the image of a community strongly linked to the traditions of the archaic period, which from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards appears to be more and more connected to a network extended between the central European area and the Aegean regions, most likely thanks to the growing importance of the harbour of Numana.