Lombard weapons from Fiesole, Tuscany (6th–7th century C.E.): old archaeological data for new considerations

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The article focuses on the analysis of seven Lombard weapons datable between the end of 6th and the 7th century C.E. and present in the Archaeological Museum of Fiesole, in the north-eastern area of Tuscany in Italy. These objects, only partially published, and coming both from the Lombard necropolis of Area Garibaldi and from unknown contexts, have been compared with similar materials on national scale of the 6th-7th century C.E. and represent a relevant term of archaeological analysis for the transition between Late Antiquity Era and Lombard domination in Fiesole.

Keywords: Fiesole, Lombards, axe, spear, scramasax.

Langobardsko orožje iz Fiesole v Toskani (6. - 7. stoletje n. št.): stari arheološki podatki za nove razmisleke

Članek se osredotoča na analizo sedmih kosov langobardskega orožja, ki jih je mogoče umestiti v obdobje med koncem šestega in sedmega stoletja po Kr. in ki se nahajajo v Arheološkem muzeju v mestu Fiesole na severovzhodu Toskane. Te predmete, ki so bili le delno objavljeni, odkriti pa so bili na langobardski nekropoli na območju Garibaldi in tudi v neznanih kontekstih, smo primerjali s podobnimi gradivi iz 6. in 7. stoletja po Kr., odkritimi po vsej državi. Omenjeni predmeti predstavljajo pomemben del arheoloških analiz za prehod iz obdobja pozne antike v čas prevlade Langobardov v Fiesolu.

Ključne besede: Fiesole, Langobardi, sekira, sulica, scramasax.

The presence of Lombards and the formation of their identity are significant research themes that over time have attracted various interdisciplinary studies. The weapons analyzed in this paper were found on the site of the current Town Hall of Fiesole at the end of the 19th century. They represent only a small part of the larger Ph.D. study by the writer (*The definition of Lombard identity (cc. 5th - 8th A.D.). Archaeology of social construction between barbaricum, Italy and Tuscany*) underway at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Primorska in Slovenia.

From a European point of view, the reminded themes are deeply related to the general European matters concerning the integration between German invaders and local communities in terms of migration, identity, and social construction problems. From this point of view, that is the same of the reminded Ph.D. project, also the analysis proposed here on the selected weapon is related to all those archaeological and historical studies that concern the relationship between the *barbaricum* and the Mediterranean world and the formation of European consciousness. From the 5th century, the societies that characterized the European contest deeply

changed. This great historical phase brought on a new civilization that, among various differences, spread all over Europe and that was created by the early Christian culture and by multicultural values. The archaeological materials presented here represent this historical phase in Fiesole. In a broad sense, these objects allow us to understand the development of Fiesole, thus considering them as a fundamental material aspect of the Lombard society that characterized the town since the end of the 6th century C.E. As we will see, the weapons in question do not come from scientifically documented archaeological layers, but their analysis, however, constitute a fundamental part for the study of the Lombard heritage of Fiesole.

In the last years, various studies have been carried out on the Lombard presence in Tuscany between the 6th and the 8th century C.E., though at the moment there is not a complete or defined research. All these cases regard coastal Tuscany or the south-western part of the region, but the northeastern part (along the Apennine mountains) is the richest from an archaeological point of view. Furthermore, between the end of the 6th C.E. and the end of Lombards' Kingdom, it was the site of the military border between Lombards and Imperials. Tuscany was not conquered by the Lombards in the first phase of their Italian invasion, but in a second one, at the time of King Agilulf of the Bavarian dynasty around 593-594 C.E. From this moment (or little before), in *Tuscia* there was one of the most important Italian Lombard cities, that is Lucca as a ducal capital. However, also other cities, such as Chiusi (the other Tuscan ducal city), Arezzo, Pistoia, Siena, and Pisa have Lombard traces. Besides these cases, several significant early medieval urban burials were dug also in Fiesole, between 1986 and 2015. Fiesole could be a particularly important step forward for the knowledge of Lombard presence in Tuscany because of the presence of 90 partially or completely unpublished tombs from the various cemeteries dated between the 6th and the 8th centuries C.E. One of the most important scholars who

published on Fiesole Lombard materials (but not on the complete amount) was Otto von Hessen in 1971 (von Hessen 1971b).

Fiesole during Lombard domination

As already mentioned, between the second half of the 6th and the 7th century C.E. Tuscany saw many changes in political and historical conditions so that several cities (Ciampoltrini 1994, 615-633; Vaccaro and Citter 2003; Brogiolo 2005; Citter 2012) – such as Lucca (Ciampoltrini and Notini 1990; Ciampoltrini 2011), Pisa (Alberti and Paribeni 2011), Pistoia (Vannini 1985; Vannini 1987; Vannini 1997, 37-54), Florence (Scamporrino 2010), Fiesole (von Hessen 1971b; Von Hessen 1975; Biondi 2018b; Biondi 2019a), Siena (Cantini 2005), Arezzo (Molinari and Nespoli 2005), Luni (Lusuardi Siena 2003), Cosa (Celuzza and Fentress 1994), Roselle (Celuzza and Fentress 1994), and Chiusi (Falluomini 2009) – met some sensitive topographical and material transformations while the stability of the urban structures proved to be particularly firm in those more strategically important demic centers (Jarnut 2002; Petersen 2013).

Following the Lombard invasion of Italy in 568 C.E., the duchies of Lucca and Chiusi were created (perhaps due to the pre-existence *in loco* of garrisons of Lombards *foederati* and *exercitales* of the Empire) and *Tuscia* gradually went out from the political influence of the Eastern Roman Empire (Jarnut 2002). Only with the offensive of King Agilulf of 593-594 C.E., also the north-eastern portion of the region, with the centers of Pistoia, Fiesole, and Florence (Vannini 1997; Magno 1998; Biondi 2018a), were finally included in the Lombard *Regnum*, through the *diverticulum* of the *via Cassia* between Lucca and Pistoia (Alfieri 1992).

Moving on to the topography of Fiesole (Fig. 1), the actual Archaeological Area is located in its northern portion with the remains of the theater, the baths and the temple dating from the 1st century C.E. and progressively deconstructed from the 4th century C.E. and partially used for funerary purposes between the 4th and

Fiesole between the 6th and the first half of the 8th century C.E.

Figure 1. Plan of the city of Fiesole between the 5th and the 8th century C.E. (plan: Andrea Biondi).

the 7th century C.E. (von Hessen 1971b; Aleardi 1990; Biondi 2019a).

The area of the temple was investigated by E. Galli between 1910 and 1924 and it returned late ancient and early medieval deposits with a necropolis of 27 tombs of the Lombard phase datable between the end of the 6th and the middle of the 7th century C.E. (von Hessen 1971b; Biondi 2019a). The burials had homogeneous characters from an organizational (east-west oriented, excavated respecting the volumes of the 1st century C.E. temple), stratigraphic, structural, and depositional point of view. Furthermore, the tombs contained sets of weapons, belt elements, ceramics, and ornaments from the end of the 6th to the mid of the 7th century C.E. (von Hessen 1971b).

In the central area of the city, the Cathedral of S. Romolo and Piazza Mino da Fiesole were places of excavations between 1955 and 2004 (Aleardi 1990; De Marinis 1995; Biondi 2019a). Between 1955 and 1990, 7 graves were brought to

light: they had no funeral equipment, were oriented east-west and were located between the northern area of the transept and the crypt of the Cathedral of S. Romolo (De Marinis 1995). According to the archeologist and Superintendence functionary G. De Marinis, under the current Cathedral of S. Romolo were to locate the remains of the city *capitolium*, while the *forum* had to be identified in the area of the current Piazza Mino da Fiesole (De Marinis 1995). Also in 1955, an isolated tomb was found at the site of the seminary of Fiesole: it was oriented south-west-north/east, it had no funeral equipment and limited bone remains of the deceased. Therefore, the central area of the city would have been de-functionalized as early as the 5th-6th century C.E. and from the 7th century C.E. some burials without funeral equipment would have been implanted, suggesting a necropolar destination of the entire northern side of the urban ancient *forum* (Biondi 2019a).

In the southern portion of Fiesole, in the park of Villa Marchi-Mussi, a single isolated tomb with two silver pins and a pottery (now missing) was found during the 20th century (Pasqui 1907).

The western portion of the city would have been the seat of an *arce*, a strong point of the city defenses, placed to guard the road network between Florence and the Mugello and datable to the Etruscan-Hellenistic age (4th-3rd century B.C.E.). The basilica of S. Alessandro (mentioned since 966 C.E. with the name of San Pietro in Gerusalemme) is located in the south/east of the *arce* and it is dedicated to one of the oldest bishop-saints of the diocese of Fiesole. In 1814, 10 tombs dug directly in the rock were brought to light under its churchyard (Aleari 1990). One of these was covered by a stone slab with a carved cross comparable with a case of Arsago Seprio in Lombardy (De Marchi 2015), while a gold cross with decorations (today missing) was recovered within a second tomb (Aleari 1990). These elements and the fact that the tombs were arranged in relation to the church would lead to date them between the late 7th and 8th centuries C.E., a moment in which the practice of burying with funeral equipment was gradually lesser-used and the social distinction would no longer be entrusted to the materiality of the objects, but to the relationship of burials with ecclesiastical buildings, as a consequence of the catholicization of Lombard society (Rotili 2001; Giostra 2014).

The eastern part of the city was characterized by a predominant necropolar function between the end of the 6th and the middle of the 7th century C.E. In this context is located the site of Area Garibaldi (where were found some of the analyzed weapons), the site of Piazza Garibaldi, and that of via del Bargellino. The necropolis of via del Bargellino is the only extra-urban one known for Fiesole and was identified by G. Maetzke in 1957 (Aleari 1990). Here, among the collapses of the Hellenistic burial chambers of the 3rd-1st century B.C.E., were brought to light two tombs with bone remains of adult indi-

viduals and some fragments of pottery currently missing. The tombs of Piazza Garibaldi, found between 1878 and 1882, would be framed in a 7th century C.E. period of deposition inside still visible but partially defunctionalized buildings of the 1st-2nd century C.E. that were probably used as a sepulchral area already from the 4th-5th century C.E. (Aleari 1990). According to the analysis of the grave goods (ceramics, belt elements and glass objects) of these burials made up by O. von Hessen (von Hessen 1971b), R. Francovich (Francovich 1984), and C. Giostra (Giostra 2000), the tombs could be datable to the second half of the 7th century C.E.

Finally, the Area Garibaldi (Fig. 2) was excavated between 1986 and 2015 and would have seen the foundation of at least two *domus* in the upper imperial era (1st-2nd century C.E.) directly on outcrops of natural rock (Cianferoni, Minucci and Pianigiani 2009). From the 4th-5th century C.E. these *domus* were subdivided into small rooms for craft and production use with shops open around the courtyard of the previous southern *domus*, a *caupona* and at least a *macellum* (De Marinis 1990; Cianferoni, De Tommaso and Megale 2015). The 6th century C.E. (especially its second half) would have represented a more sensitive moment of urban change as massive layers of collapse of Roman structures were formed throughout the area and, above all, a clear promiscuity between structures and tombs was established (Biondi 2019b).

In detail traces of housing structures (in perishable materials) and some burials have been documented (Aleari 1990). Finally, the first Lombard tombs were excavated in these collapses from the last decade of the 6th century C.E. and, overall, the area would have seen a Lombard presence till the middle of the 7th century C.E. with at least 40 tombs (Biondi 2019c). From a general point of view, when Lombards arrived in Fiesole, they would not have substantially changed the necropolar destination of Area Garibaldi, reconfirming, on the contrary, a trend in land use already started between the end of the 4th and the 6th century C.E. (Biondi 2019c).

Figure 2. Detail of the Area Garibaldi in Fiesole and of the zone of the finds of the 19th century (plan: Andrea Biondi after the free and open source database of Tuscany Region – CASTORE).

To conclude the discussion about the eastern part of the city, we want also to remember an isolated tomb discovered under the Monte Ceceri Middle School, in the locality of Borgunto (east of Fiesole): this was characterized just by the presence of few ceramic fragments (currently missing) with a generic dating to the full 7th century C.E. (Aleardi 1990).

The objects

As already anticipated, the objects analyzed do not come from scientifically documented tombs. In the inventory of the Archaeological Museum of Fiesole, realized by the archaeologist E. Galli, the first conservator of the reminded institution, they are reported from various origins. We have also to remind that the inventory is datable in its first edition to 1910 and was created by E. Galli several years after the discovery of the finds in question. However, in the pages describing the objects, some relevant informations are reported which overall reflects the knowledge of the time regarding materials that were defined with the generic and improperly definition of barbaric. In the inventory, for each object, with the exception of a single spear head, it is recorded the specific

number, the provenance and a sort of summary description with all the available informations about the context. In detail, the findings chosen and analyzed for this contribution are the following (in numerical order):

- Number 650, spear head (Figg. 5 and 10);
- Number 657, *scramasax* (Figg. 5 and 11);
- Number 666, axe head (Figg. 3 and 6);
- Number 667, axe head (Figg. 3 and 7);
- Number 670, axe head (Figg. 4 and 8);
- Number 679, axe head (Figg. 4 and 9);
- A spear head without inventory number and not cited by Edoardo Galli (Figg. 5 and 11).

Following the order just mentioned, the first spear head (number 650) is described by E. Galli in 1910 as “*Ferro di lancia di schema rettangolare, con tozza punta, angoli inferiori delle pinne arrotondati e corto cannone conico d’innesto. Non si nota la costola longitudinale nel mezzo. Lunghezza: 0,34*” (Galli 1910, 335)¹. Regarding the

¹ Here the English traduction from the original document: Spearhead with a rectangular design, with a stubby tip, rounded lower fin corners and a short conical graft socket. The longitudinal rib in the middle is not noticed. Length: 0.34.

provenance of the object, E. Galli reports “*Ignota; dono del Marchese Carlo Strozzi, epoca indeterminata*” (Galli 1910, 335)². Therefore, the find comes from the private collection of the Marquis Carlo Strozzi, representative of one of the most illustrious and ancient Florentine noble families, who donated various finds to the Archaeological Museum of Fiesole at the end of the 19th century. The Marquis, as it is known, acquired the objects of his collection both as a family inheritance and by purchasing them on the antiques market. For this reason, therefore, the provenance of this object is completely unknown.

Also the axe head number 670 derives from a donation of the Marquis Carlo Strozzi as it has been reported: “*Località ed epoca indeterminata; dono del Marchese Carlo Strozzi*” (Galli 1910, 344)³. Subsequently E. Galli describes the axe head as “*Accetta di forma identica a quelle menzionate sotto i numeri 666-7, con questa sola differenza, che l'esemplare Strozzi ha la parte posteriore foggata a martello molto più prolungata. Lunghezza: 0,20; taglio 0,15*” (Galli 1910, 344)⁴. Also in this case we do not know neither the provenance of the object, nor the exact date of discovery. However, E. Galli noticed some similarities between the specimen in question and the numbers 666 and 667 that we will see in the next lines.

The specimens 657, 666 and 667 are identifiable in order as a *scramasax* and two axe heads and were found in 1879 in the rear portion of the Town Hall of Fiesole: “*Fiesole, Piazza Mino a tergo del Palazzo Pretorio, 1879*” (Galli 1910, 342)⁵. In detail, the *scramasax* (number 657) is described as

- 2 Here the English traduction from the original document: Unknown; gift f the Marquis Carlo Strozzi, undetermined period.
- 3 Here the English traduction from the original document: Indeterminate place and time; gift f the Marquis Carlo Strozzi.
- 4 Here the English traduction from the original document: Axe head identical in shape to those mentioned under numbers 666-7, with this only difference, that the Strozzi model has a much longer hammer-shaped back. Length: 0.20; cut 0.15.
- 5 Here the English traduction from the original document: Fiesole, Piazza Mino on the back of the Palazzo Pretorio, 1879.

Lama di coltello di forma rettangolare, ad un sol taglio e con largo codolo per fissarvi il manico. Frammentata alla punta; lunghezza: 0,27 (Galli 1910, 339)⁶.

The other two specimens, already mentioned in connection with the comparison with the axe head number 670, are described on the same page of the inventory by E. Galli. In detail the scholar reports:

Numero 2 accette (secures) formate da un taglio o penna molto prolungata in basso, di schema rettangolare, dal foro ovale per il manico, fiancheggiato sulle due aperture da orecchiette, e dal dorso foggato a martello. L'aspetto generale di siffatte scuri richiama quello della cateia celtica dei più antichi monumenti etruschi e liguri (cfr. stele fiesolana di Sarthi Animies e stele primitiva della Val di Magra di proprietà Baccani a Pontremoli). Lunghezza rispettiva: 0,15 e 0,17; taglio 0,14 e 0,15 (Galli 1910, 342)⁷.

From the description of E. Galli, it is clear that the axe heads had been identified not as a Lombard weapons but, on the contrary, as objects of possible Etruscan or Ligurian origin. This erroneous consideration can be attributed to the fact that at the time, at least for Tuscany, the material knowledge on the phases following the 5th century C.E. was still rather scarce and, at the same time, the scientific community and public opinion were more attracted by roman and etruscan origins rather than by Middle Ages.

Furthermore, the area in which these 3 weapons were found could be identifiable with the current Area Garibaldi. Unfortunately, it is

- 6 Here the English traduction from the original document: Rectangular knife blade, single cut and with a wide tang to fix the handle. Fragmented at the tip; length: 0.27.
- 7 Here the English traduction from the original document: Number 2 axes (secures) formed by a very prolonged cut or pen at the bottom, with a rectangular pattern, with an oval hole for the handle, flanked on the two openings by orecchiette, and a hammer-shaped back. The general appearance of such shutters recalls that of the Celtic cateia of the most ancient Etruscan and Ligurian monuments (see Fiesolan stele of Sarthi Animies and primitive stele of Val di Magra owned by Baccani in Pontremoli). Respective length: 0.15 and 0.17; cut 0.14 and 0.15.

not possible to exactly place the objects analyzed but, considering the presence of the currently documented necropolis, it is absolutely plausible that these come from tombs destroyed during some agricultural activities or works linked to the extension of the Town Hall at the end of the 19th century. In fact, as we can see from the historical cartography, the area seems to be used for cultivation between the 1820 and 1830 (the period in which was realized the cadastral cartography reported), while, on the west front towards the current Piazza Mino da Fiesole (formerly Piazza della Cattedrale), stands the actual Municipal Palace of Fiesole, dating from the 15th century C.E. at least.

The last cited objects in the inventory is an axe head identified with number 679. E. Galli describes it as

Accetta di tipo analogo ai nn. 666-7 e 670, però col taglio largo prolungato in basso e desinente a punta in alto. Manca del prolungamento a martello sul dorso. Lunghezza: 0,15, taglio: 0,14 (Galli 1910, 347)⁸.

About its provenance, we just know that it was found in Fiesole in 1895 but in an indeterminate place: "*Fiesole, località indeterminata, 1895*" (Galli 1910, 347)⁹. As already considered for the other axe heads, E. Galli recognized a certain material and technical similarity between the axe head number 679 and the other objects, but he remained convinced of their greater antiquity, wrongly dating them back to the Etruscans and the Ligurians.

As already mentioned, the last object analyzed, a spear head, does not have any inventory number and, today, are both unknown the exact date of entry into the collections of the Archaeological Museum of Fiesole and its provenance.

Finally, all the objects are currently exhibited in a showcase in the Room 5 of the Archae-

ological Museum of Fiesole, at the beginning of the section dedicated to the local Middle Ages.

The analysis

From a methodological point of view, after the analysis of the archaeological, archival, and written data available, we moved on to the analysis of the material and morphological characteristics of the weapons.

Starting from the axes, as known, their presence among the Lombard grave goods in Italy is quite rare. This low recurrence it has been interpreted also as the result of their limited use in battle and, from another point of view, it must be reminded that there is a current scientific problem related to the concrete definition of their use (Parenti 1994b, pp. 483-486). Some known axe heads, in fact, could have been used both for war purposes and as a simple carpentry tool (Parenti 1994a; Parenti 1994b; Giostra 2014). Nevertheless, the axe heads found with other objects typical of warrior kits are usually considered weapons.

In Fiesole, it is present a tomb, under review by the writer but of uncertain position, excavated in 1988 in the Area Garibaldi with an axe head (in addition to the four analyzed here). In this case, the kit belonging to a male individual aged 50-60 consisted of a blue glass cup, a hernial belt, a knife, and a short blade axe head¹⁰. If placed in relation to some anthropological characteristics of the individual, such as the consistent development of the musculature of the trunk and upper limbs, and considering also the absence of other important elements of a warrior kit, this axe head actually represents same interpretative problems as, considering the reminded physical aspects, it could have belonged to an individual that may just not even have been specifically a warrior (Biondi 2019a). Therefore, relying on the current available data, neither for the tomb of 1988 it is possible to distinguish the function of the axe solely on the basis of its morphological features. Remaining in Fiesole, we must

8 Here the English traduction from the original document: Head axe of a type similar to nos. 666-7 and 670, but with a wide cut extended at the bottom and ending with a point at the top. The hammer extension on the back is missing. Length: 0.15, Cut: 0.14.

9 Here the English traduction from the original document: Fiesole, undetermined locality, 1895.

10 The axe head of the tomb was found in the same position of that of tomb 4 identified in Povegliano Veronese (Giostra 2014).

also remember the considerations expressed by R. Parenti in 1994 on the axe heads examined here (Parenti 1994b). Although R. Parenti had already included these last objects in some general considerations relating to the actual use of bearded axes, we believe that the reinterpretation of the 1910 inventory documents of E. Galli, proposed here, will definitively help to include in the scientific debate the objects examined in the light of more general considerations on the Lombard presence in Fiesole.

Starting with the material and morphological analysis of the axe heads, it has been firstly considered the shape of the blade. As known, the blade technically corresponds to the portion of the weapon that includes the cut (the side with which the shot was carried), the upper back and the lower back. The nape and the form of the handling can be used as other criteria for classification.

The four axe heads examined are all belonging to the type of bearded axes (*Bartäxte*) but some differences can be identified among them. As known, the distinctive feature of the specimens from this group of shape blade is the downward development of the blade, whose cut assumes a L profile (Parenti 1994b; Cagnana 2003).

The two axe heads marked with inventory numbers 666 and 670 (Figg. 3, 4, 6 and 8) are both characterized by sub-rectangular blades slightly narrowing from top to bottom. The upper backs are curved and inclined upwards. The axe head marked with inventory number 667 (Figg. 3 and 7) has the width of the rectangular blade that is more constant in its length than for number 666 and 670 but has a similar upper back that is slightly inclined upwards. The last axe head, inventory number 679 (Figg. 4 and 9), has a trapezoidal bearded blade: the particular conformation is characterized by a sensitive variation in width along the development of the blade.

Regarding other morphological aspects related to the axe heads, the number 670 has two couples of triangular reinforcement shoulders symmetrical to each other (one on the up-

Inv. n. 666

Inv. n. 667

Figure 3 Head axes n. 666 and n. 667 (photo: Andrea Biondi).

per back and one on the lower back). Number 667, on the contrary, has a simple cylinder handle. Numbers 666 and 679 have T-shaped handles with characteristic dilations of the final portion that curves into two shoulders (one upper and one lower). About the napes of the four axe heads (that, as known, is an element collocated behind the handle hole whose function was above all related to the balancing of the object), these are present in 3 of the 4 analyzed specimens (number 666, 667 and 670). In two of the specimens (667 and 670), napes are distinct from the backs and have a rectangular shape. For 667 the nape has a small shape (3 cm) whereas the nape of number 670 has a large shape (8 cm). Regarding numbers 666 and 679, with T-shaped handles, the first has just a 1,5 cm long nape before the T end, whereas number 679 has not nape.

Inv. n. 670

Inv. n. 679

Figure 4. Head axes n. 670 and n. 679
(photo: Andrea Biondi).

Overall, axe heads number 667 and 670 have a width between the nape and the blade of 18 and 21 cm. The other two axe heads are smaller in this value, presenting 14 cm (number 666) and 16 cm (number 679). Finally, the downward development of the blades of all the specimens oscillates between 14 (numbers 666, 667 and 670) and 15 cm (number 679).

According to current literature, from a chronological point of view, the bearded axes found in Italy are generally dated to the late 6th and throughout the 7th century (Parenti 1994a, 117; Parenti 1994b, 483) and, about the specimens considered here, they would be in line with the frequentation currently known for the necropolis of the Area Garibaldi dated between the end of the 6th century and the 7th century. Just to make a concise summary, in Italy speci-

mens of bearded axes have been found between Cividale del Friuli (Ahumada Silva, Lopreato and Tagliaferri 1990, 43, XIX, 1), Testona (von Hessen 1971a), Sirmione (Bolla 1996), Langasco di Camporone (Bianchi and Cagnana 1995), Tesis di Vivaro (Ahumada Silva 1991, 76, 165), Castelvechio di Peveragno (Micheletto 1996, 122-123) and near Imola (Baruzzi 1978, 426-427; Gelichi 2005, 367, 16.3). In particular, a specimen very similar to the one with a trapezoidal blade from Fiesole (number 679), but with a slightly narrowed blade, it has been found near Imola in Emilia Romagna and reported by S. Gelichi (Gelichi 2005, 367, 16.3). However, the find, now kept in the Museum of Imola, does not come from a certain context and it is not datable with certainty. Another possible comparison for the axe head number 679 from Fiesole, is constituted by the axe head found in tomb 24 of the necropolis of S. Stefano in Pertica in Cividale del Friuli (Ahumada Silva, Lopreato and Tagliaferri 1990, 43, XIX, 1). This last one is overall slightly smaller than the Fiesolan specimen and, with the tomb, is dated to first years of 7th century C.E. (Brozzi 1990). In conclusion, among all the Italian sites, in this moment Fiesole retains the highest number of specimens of bearded head axes with a total of 4 currently known cases.

About the two analyzed spear heads, as known, this type of weapon is one of the most frequently attested weapons in the depositions of warriors (on foot and horsemen) in Italy, in association with *spatha* and shield (Giostra 2012, 232). Therefore, for Lombard the spear was an object which, in addition to its functionality, had also a strong social and cultural value sanctioning, in fact, the maturity of a young man and was also deeply related to kings' power (Gasparri 1983).

From a material point of view, it is possible to classify the spear heads on the shape of the blade, which corresponds by definition to the part of the weapon between the two wires. Other criteria of analysis are the blade-socket ratio and the shape and decoration of the socket.

Figure 5 Spear head without inv. n., spear head n. 650 and scramasax n. 657 (photo: Andrea Biondi).

The spear head number 650 (Figg. 5 and 10) can be identified as a cusp with parallel wires and with an elongated and narrow body whose width does not noticeably vary along the blade (with the exception of the tip and the narrowing that precedes the socket). This specimen has also

a spine that runs out in the middle of the blade. The other spear head (Figg. 5 and 10) that, as we have reminded, unfortunately has not an inventory number, has a triangular body blade with the width growing progressively from the end up at the base, where the narrowing that precedes

the socket is dampened with oblique edges converge towards the socket. There is also a median spine all along the blade.

About other aspects, both the spear heads have blades longer than the sockets and present truncated cone-shaped simple socket without any decoration (as burin engraving or metal molding).

The specimen number 650 belongs to one of the oldest variants attested for the Lombards. The considered specimen from Fiesole is 40 cm length and 3,2 cm width and, at the moment, in addition to the unpublished example of Fiesole analyzed here, this variant is known in Italy in north-eastern contexts, like Lombardy, Veneto (De Marchi and Cini 1988) and Friuli Venezia Giulia and it is more present abroad than in Italy. As comparisons we consider the specimen from tomb 5 of Trezzo sull'Adda (Roffia 1986, 93) and other examples from Pacengo (von Hessen 1968, 31), from Brescia (Panazza 1964, 168), from tomb 35 of the necropolis of San Mauro in Cividale del Friuli (Ahumada Silva 2010, 76) and from Ofanengo (von Hessen 1965, 31). From a chronological point of view, this type can be placed between the beginning and the last third of the 7th century C.E. (De Marchi and Cini 1988).

The second specimen of spear head (without inventory number) is characterized by a rhomboid-shaped blade, longer than the socket and has been found both in North Italy and in the Centre of the peninsula (von Hessen 1971a; Sesino 1989; Rupp 1997; Paroli and Ricci 2007). The example of Fiesole is 26 cm length and 4 cm width and, from a chronological point of view, could be dated throughout the 7th century C.E. In conclusion, as seen for the axe heads, the two specimens of spear head considered would also be in line with the frequentation of the Area Garibaldi, dated between the end of the 6th century and throughout the 7th century C.E.

The last object analyzed in this paper is a specimen of *scramasax* (Figg. 5 and 11) which is described as a spearhead in the aforementioned inventory of the Archaeological Museum of Fie-

sole by E. Galli (number 657)¹¹. *Scramasax*, in association with *spathae* or alone, is a frequent object that has been found in various sites and warriors' burial in Italy (von Hessen 1971a). As known, the morphological evolution of this weapon follows a progressive increase in the length and also in the width of the blade. The presence of grooves (*Blutrillen*) near the back on both sides of the blade is another usual aspect for this type of weapon.

From a material point of view, the *scramasax* in Italy are divided into 3 groups depending on the length of the blades (Giostra 2012, 229-231). Regarding this aspect, we have the *kurzsax* (datable to the 6th century and to the beginning of the 7th century C.E.) that presents a length of the blade between 19 and 30 cm and a maximum width between 2,6 and 3,5 cm. Between 570 and 640 C.E., a more massive short *sax* (blade length 23-30 cm) with a width of 3,5-4 cm is also documented. Since the end of the 6th century C.E. and up to the third quarter of the 7th century C.E., a medium-sized *sax* (blade length 30-46 cm; width 3,5-5,8 cm) spread, while, from the last quarter of the 7th century C.E. there is the *Langsax*, with a significant increase (between 48 and 80 cm) in the length of the blade (Giostra 2012, 229-231).

The *scramasax* number 657 here analyzed has not a good complex state of conservation with a 27 cm residual length (without the tip), a thickness of 0,5 cm and a 3 cm width with the usual grooves (*Blutrillen*) near the back on both sides of the blade. The specimen number 657 from Fiesole can be considered as a *Kurzsax*. In Italy, reporting the comparisons listed by C. Giostra (Giostra 2012, 229-230), this type of weapon was found in the tomb 24 of necropolis of S. Stefano in Pertica (length 25 cm; width 3,3 cm, first decades of the 7th century C.E.; Ahumada Silva, Lopreato and Tagliaferri 1990, 47 (n. 5), 102 (n. 11), tav. XXIII, 2) and in the tomb 43 of necropolis of S. Mauro (length 24 cm, but the tip is missing; width 3,6 cm; last third of the 6th

11 There is also another *scramasax* known for Fiesole and it belongs to tomb XX in the Area Garibaldi that was discovered in 2010. This last specimen is inherited and is being studied by the writer.

century C.E., Ahumada Silva 2000, 202, n.3) in Cividale del Friuli, Monselice (tombs 748 and 749; De Marchi and Possenti 1998, 202-203, tavv. 17n e IV/a), tomb 3 of via Monte Suello in Verona (length 20 cm approx.; width 2,8 cm; early 7th century C.E.; Modonesi and La Rocca 1989, 69, tav. V, 2), Sirmione (hypothetical length approx. 28,5 cm; width 3,4 cm; find without context; Sesino 1989, 73, 5.b, tav. IX), Testona (6 specimens partly fragmentary, however with a length that can be reconstructed between 26 and 29,2 cm; width 3,3-3,6 cm; decontextualized; von Hesse 1971a, 18, 63, nn. 92, 93, 95-98, tav. 10), in the tombs 6, 51, 76, 84, 86, 119, 122, 137, 145 of Nocera Umbra (length 22,6-25,5 cm; length *sax* t. 119 2,9 cm; 570-630 C.E.; Rupp 2005, 11, 69, 96, 105, 108-109, 139, 142, 155, 163, tavv. 15,10; 69,8; 92,20; 100,17; 103,5; 130,5; 133,11; 145,6; 152,9), in the tombs 90 (length 19 cm; width 2,5 cm; beginning of the 7th century C.E.), 111 (length 23,5 cm; width 2,3 cm; first quarter of the 7th century C.E.), 170 (length cm 28,2; width 3,2 cm; end of the 6th century C.E.), 176 (length 28 cm; width 3,4 cm) and 180 (length 26 cm) of Castel Trosino (Paroli and Ricci 2007) and in the tomb inside the oratory of SS. Nazaro and Celso (length 29,1 cm; width 4 cm; first decades of the 7th century C.E.) at Garbagnate Monastero (Sannazaro 1994, 300-301, n. 2, fig. 190,1). In conclusion, as already seen for the axe heads and spear heads, also for the *scramasax* number 657 there is a chronological confirmation of what is known for the Area Garibaldi, since the object can be dated between the end of 6th and the beginning of the 7th century C.E.

Conclusion

An essential part of the work presented here was the preliminary research carried out on the inventory of the Archeological Museum of Fiesole by E. Galli in 1910. As already mentioned, the scholar made a list of all the objects present in the museum collections long after the first acquisitions and after at least 20 years with respect to the finds analyzed. Despite some aspects revised from an interpretative point of view, such

as the question relating to the attribution of axe heads 666 and 667 to the Etruscan era, overall E. Galli recognized some material aspects recurrent among the axe heads, while limited itself to an unspecified dating, as regards the tip of spear head (number 650).

Unfortunately, the fact that at least one axe (number 670) and the aforementioned spearhead (number 650) are not surely from Fiesole does not help to improve the reconstruction of the context of the Area Garibaldi but, at the same time, they nevertheless offer the possibility of describing a further part of the medieval heritage of Fiesole and of updating the actual state and origin of local museum's collections. From an archaeological point of view, in Italy the axes (of all specimens) do not represent a particularly frequent find in tombs: consequently, having the described four bearded axes, together with the one already known and discovered in 1988 in the Area Garibaldi, is a relevant fact.

About the social value related to weapons, even if we do not know nothing about the original positions of the objects within any possible burials, they represent elements of medium and high level within the Lombard material panorama. About these aspects, the analyzed spearheads could have been important material and symbolic objects also among the Lombards' community of Fiesole and they could be also accompanied by eventual complete outfits. An example of this hypothetical statement is given by the case of tomb XI of the Area Garibaldi, datable to the first quarter of the 7th century C.E. (Biondi 2019c, 322). Studied and published by the writer, tomb XI belonged to a young warrior with a complete set of weapons and objects composed by *spatha*, spear, shield, belt elements (without decorations) and a bone comb. However, the dispersion of the original contexts does not allow further evaluations for the two specimens here analyzed. Finally, the type of the considered *scramasax*, is a rather frequent weapon in Lombard depositions of the 6th-early 7th century C.E. Also in this case, as for the spear heads, it was probably an integral part of a burial set

and, although it is not possible to reconstruct the original context, it represents the second known specimen for Fiesole, and the only one published at the moment.

In conclusion, the result of the application of the type of material and historical analysis (referring to local museum's documents) used in this paper will be that, extending it to the entire Lombard material heritage of Fiesole, it will be possible to try to trace a chronological occurrence of the town between the 5th and the 8th century C.E. From this point of view, as already affirmed, Fiesole seems to constitute a promising case study for the archaeological analysis of the passage between the first and the second phase of the Lombard settlement in Tuscany and, more generally, for the debate on regional and national urbanism in the transition from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages.

Catalogue

The 7 finds analyzed in this contribution are presented following the order of the discussion in the text starting with the 4 ax heads (inv. nn. 666, 667, 670 and 679), followed by the 2 spear heads (inv. n. 650 and that one without number) and, finally, concluding with the *scramasax* (inv. n. 657). As seen, the finds are reported on the basis of the corresponding inventory numbers of the Archaeological Museum of Fiesole, except for one of the two spearheads currently devoid of any numerical reference.

Furthermore, the objects have been described following the following order:

- Data about discovery, context, year, and data available;
- Analysis, brief description of the find with relative dimensional, morphological, and conservation data. In the description of the objects the following abbreviations referring to dimensional aspects are used:
  - L. = lenght (maximum value);
  - W. = weight (maximum value);

- T. = thickness (maximum and minimum value);

- D. = diameter (maximum value referring to sockets and maximum and, eventually, minimum value for handle holes);

- Pres. = preserved dimensional value (in case of fractured objects).

- Dating, definition of the chronological period in which the object can be dated.

Finally, to complete the catalog, there have been inserted the descriptive drawings of the finds together with the photos of each object.

- Axe head (inv. n. 666, fig. 6)

Data about discovery: found in 1879 in the rear portion of the Town Hall of Fiesole without any other archaeological indications.

Analysis: forged iron; intact. L.= 14 cm; W.= 14 cm; D. (handle hole) = 3,5 cm; T.= 3,5 - 0,5 cm.

Iron bearded axe head characterized by sub-rectangular blade slightly narrowing from top to bottom. The upper back is curved and inclined upwards. The specimen has T-shaped handle with a circular handle hole and the characteristic dilations of the final portion that curves

Figure 6. Head axe n. 666 (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

Figure 7. Head axe n. 667 (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

into two shoulders (one upper and one lower) and a 1,5 cm long nape before the T end.

Dating: end of the 6th century - 7th century C.E.

- Axe head (inv. n. 667, fig. 7)

Data about discovery: found in 1879 in the rear portion of the Town Hall of Fiesole without any other archaeological indications.

Analysis: forged iron; intact. L.= 18 cm; W.= 14 cm; D. (handle hole) = 2,5 cm; T.= 3 – 0,5 cm.

Iron bearded axe head characterized by sub-rectangular blade slightly narrowing from top to bottom with the width of the rectangular blade that remains constant in its length. The specimen has a simple cylinder handle hole with rectangular shoulders and a nape with a small shape (3 cm).

Dating: end of the 6th century - 7th century C.E.

- Axe head (inv. n. 670, fig. 8)

Data about discovery: unknown origin. The object was donated to the Museum of Fiesole by the Marquis Carlo Strozzi at the end of the 19th century.

Analysis: forged iron; fractured along the central part of the blade. L.= 21 cm; W.= 14 cm; D. (handle hole) = 3 cm; T.= 2 – 0,5 cm.

Iron bearded axe head characterized by sub-rectangular blades slightly narrowing from top to bottom. The upper back is curved and inclined upwards. The axe head has with a circular handle hole and two couples of triangular reinforcement shoulders symmetrical to each other (one on the upper back and one on the lower back) and a long rectangular nape (8 cm).

Dating: end of the 6th century - 7th century C.E.

- Axe head (inv. n. 679, fig. 9)

Data about discovery: the object was found in Fiesole in a undetermined locality in 1895.

Figure 8. Head axe n. 670 (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

Analysis: forged iron; intact. L.= 16 cm; W.= 15 cm; D. (handle hole) = 4x3 cm; T.= 4 – 0,5 cm.

Iron bearded axe head characterized by a trapezoidal blade with a sensitive variation in width along the development of the blade (the lower edge of the cut measures 1/3 less than the maximum width). The upper back is curved and strongly inclined upwards, unlike other specimens belonging to this type (where it is generally perpendicular to the rod). The axe head has a T-shaped handle with an elliptical handle hole, characteristic dilations of the final portion that curves into two shoulders (one upper and one lower) and has not nape.

Figure 9. Head axe n. 679 (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

Dating: end of the 6th century - 7th century C.E.

- Spear head (inv. n. 650, fig. 10)

Data about discovery: Unknown origin. The object was donated to the Museum of Fiesole by the Marquis Carlo Strozzi at the end of the 19th century.

Analysis: forged iron; fractured along the blades and at the tip. Restored in the socket. Pres. L.= 40 cm; Pres. W.= 3,2 cm; D. (socket) = 2,5 cm; T.= 1 - 0,1 cm.

Iron spear head with parallel wires and with an elongated and narrow body whose width does not noticeably vary along the blade (with the exception of the tip and the narrowing that precedes the socket). The object has also a spine that runs out in the middle of the blade. The length of the blade exceeds that of the socket and the object has a truncated cone-shaped simple socket without any decoration (as burin engraving or metal molding) and partially restored.

Dating: 600-670 C.E.

- Spear head without inv. n. (fig. 10)

Data about discovery: the exact entry into the collections of the Archaeological Museum of

Figure 10. Spear head without inv. n. and spear head n. 650. The restored parts are marked in black (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

Fiesole and the provenance of the spear head are unknown.

Analysis: forged iron; fractured along the blades and at the tip. Restored in the socket and the central spine. Pres. L.= 26 cm; Pres. W.= 4 cm; D. (socket) = 2,5 cm; T.= 1,5 - 0,1 cm.

Iron spear head with triangular body blade and with the width grows progressively from the end up at the base, where the narrowing that precedes the socket is dampened with oblique edges converge towards the socket. There is also a median spine all along the blade. The object has the length of the blade exceeding that of the socket and has a truncated cone-shaped simple socket without any decoration (as burin engraving or metal molding) and partially restored.

Dating: 7th century C.E.

- *Scramasax* (inv. n. 657, fig. 11)

Data about discovery: found in 1879 in the rear portion of the Town Hall of Fiesole without any other archaeological indications.

Analysis: forged iron; fractured along the blade and at the tip. Pres. L.= 27 cm; Pres. W.= 3 cm; T.= 0,5 - 0,1 cm.

Iron *scramasax* with *Blutrillen* near the back on both sides of the blade. From a classifi-

Figure 11. Scramasax n. 657 (drawing: Andrea Biondi).

cation point of view, the specimen can be considered as a *Kurzsaß*.

Dating: end of 6th century - beginning of the 7th century C.E.

Summary

In the last decades researches focusing on material culture and topographical aspects of the 5th and the 8th centuries C.E. have been developed in Italy and in Tuscany in order to analyse the dynamics of urban transformation between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages and the Lombard phenomenon. Fiesole, in the north-eastern area of Tuscany, could represent a relevant term of archaeological analysis for the transition between the late antique phase and the Lombard one. The analysis of the weapons presented in the article, only partially published, and coming both from Area Garibaldi in Fiesole and from unknown contexts, can enrich this framework. These objects (axe heads, spear heads and a *scramasax*), datable between the end of 6th and the 7th century C.E., have been compared with similar materials on national scale, which have highlighted multiple analogies between Fiesole and other contexts of the 6th-7th century C.E. in central and northern Italy. The resulting data – once included in an up-to-date discussion about the evolution of Italian city between 5th and 8th century C.E. – could allow to remove the archaeological research in Fiesole from fortuity, from the indication of the punctiform evidence and from the underestimating of its innovative power.

Povzetek

V zadnjih desetletjih so se v Italiji in v Toskani okrepile raziskave, ki se osredotočajo na materialno kulturo in topografske vidike 5. in 8. stoletja po Kr., in sicer z namenom analize dinamike urbane preobrazbe v obdobju med pozno antiko in zgodnjim srednjim vekom ter pojavom Langobardov. Fiesole na severovzhodu Toskane bi lahko predstavljal pomemben del arheoloških analiz za prehod med poznoantično in langobardsko fazo. Orožje, analizirano v pričujočem članku, je bilo doslej le delno objavljeno, prihaja pa tako z območja Garibaldi v Fiesolu kakor tudi iz neznanih kontekstov. Pričujoča analiza lahko potemtakem obogati okvir raziskav. Primerjava teh predmetov (glave sekir, kopja in en *scramasax*), ki jih je mogoče uvrstiti v obdobje med koncem 6. in 7. stoletja po Kr., s podobnimi gradivi, odkritimi po vsej državi, je pokazala na več podobnosti med Fiesolom in drugimi konteksti iz obdobja med 6. in 7. stol. po Kr. v osrednji in severni Italiji. Tako pridobljeni podatki, ki so bili nekoč vključeni v dosedanje razpravo o razvoju italijanskih mest med 5. in 8. stoletjem po Kr., bi lahko arheološke raziskave v Fiesolu z navedbo natančnih podatkov odstranili iz območja naključnega in podcenjevanja njihove inovativne moči.

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