

The Etruscan Skulls of the Rostock Anatomical Collection — an Attempt to Compare Them with a Hallstatt-Celtic Population from North Bavaria and with Other Skeletal Findings of the First Thousand Years BC

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Seven skulls in Rostock's anatomical collection belong to the ancient population of the Etruscans. After determination of age and sex the following measurements were taken among others: maximum skull breadth and ear bregma height. Morphological and metrical traits of the seven Etruscan skulls were compared biometrically to the Celtic population in North Bavaria using the measurements of Claassen and to other Celtic populations. All the Etruscan skulls were found to be masculine, their age ranging from 20 to 60 years, with an average age of about thirty. A significant difference between the Etruscan and the Celtic in North Bavaria could be demonstrated: the Etruscan skulls were narrower (maximum skull breadth) and not as large in height (ear bregma height) as the Celtic ones in North Bavaria. However, the Etruscans showed similarities in these metrical traits with Celtic skulls from Manching in South Bavaria and Hallstatt in Austria. Due to the similarities of the Etruscan skulls with some Celtic skulls from South Bavaria and Austria it seemed possible that the Etruscans are more original inhabitants of Etruria than immigrants from Asia Minor.

Key words: skulls, Etruscan, Celtic, North Bavaria.

All the seven Etruscan skulls were found in Corneto Tarquinia in the years 1881 and 1882 and were given as a present to Rostock's anatomical collection in 1882. The origin of the Etruscan who were contemporary with the Celts whether they were original inhabitants or had immigrated from Asia Minor to Italy is discussed controversially. To put the Etruscan skulls of Rostock's anatomical collection in an ethnological grid it seemed interesting to compare them with skeletal remains of the first thousand years BC, especially with a Hallstatt-Celtic population in North Bavaria [2, 3].

Etruscans and Hallstatt-Celts were contemporary having their cultural climax approximately from 800 to 500 BC. The Latène-Celtic skeletal remains were dated to a period from 500 to 0. The Early Bronze Age skeletal remains from Moravia are



Fig. 1. Map with skeletal findings used for comparison: Etruscan skulls from Corneto-Tarquinia, Hallstatt-Celtic skulls from Beilngries, Dietfurt and Schirndorf, Hallstatt-Celtic skulls from different places in Baden-Württemberg and Hallstatt, Early Bronze Age skulls from Mähren, Latène-Celtic skulls from Manching

dated to 1800 to 1600 BC. The local origin of the populations is described on a map (Fig. 1). Tarquinia is located 70 km in north western direction to Rome. The Hallstatt-Celtic cemeteries of Beilngries [2], Dietfurt [3] and Schirndorf [3] are located in the north of the Danube river. The Hallstatt-Celtic populations used for a comparison originated from different places in Baden-Württemberg [9] and from Hallstatt [8] in Austria in the near of Salzburg. The Latène-Celts came from Manching [11] in the south of the Danube river and the Early Bronze Age skeletons came from different places in Mähren [10] today in the Czech Republic.

Concerning the cultural background of the Etruscans and Celts [4], both population had the idea that the deceased needs something for the life after. Therefore the

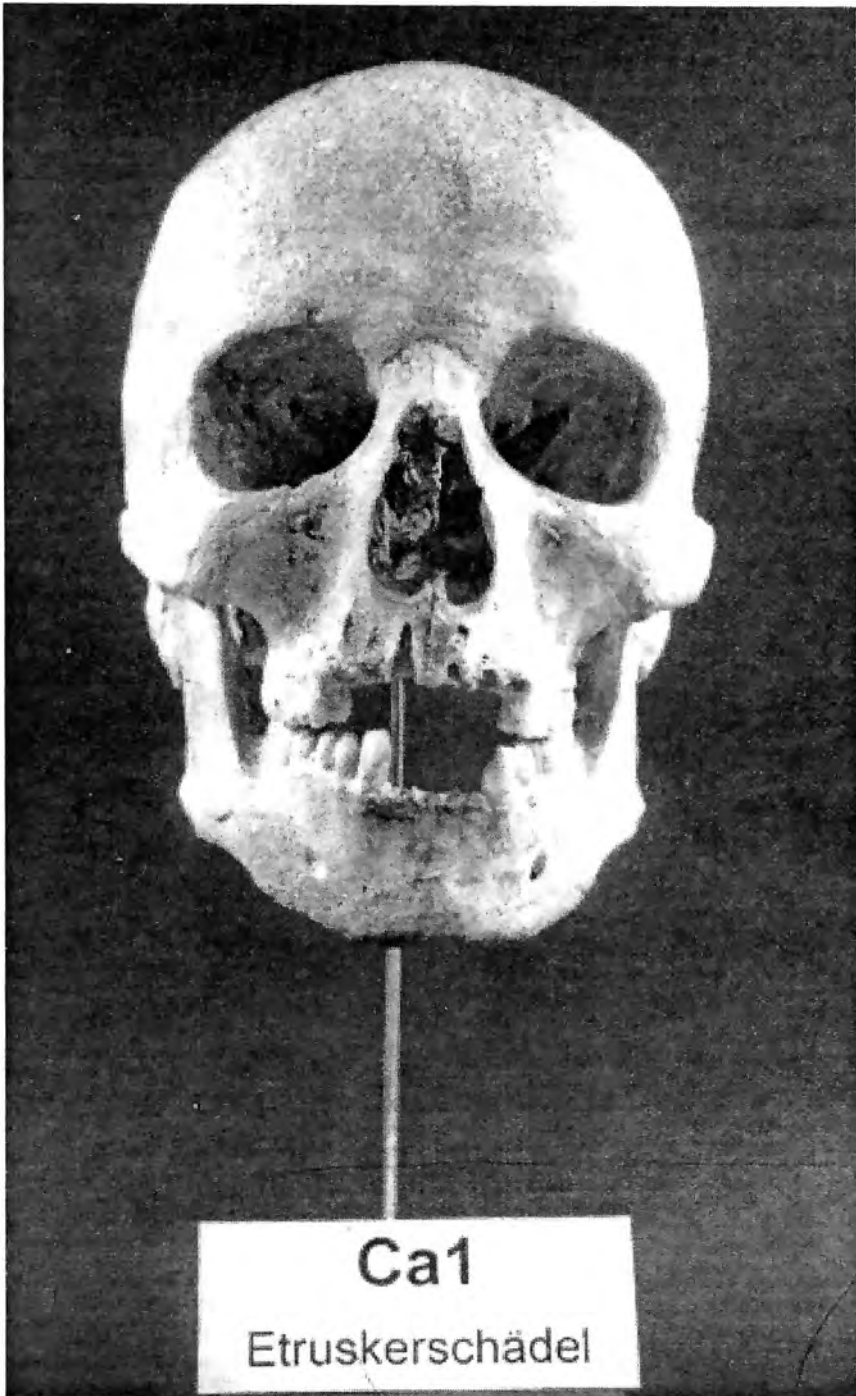


Fig. 2. Etruscan skull Ca1 from Corneto-Tarquinia in frontal view

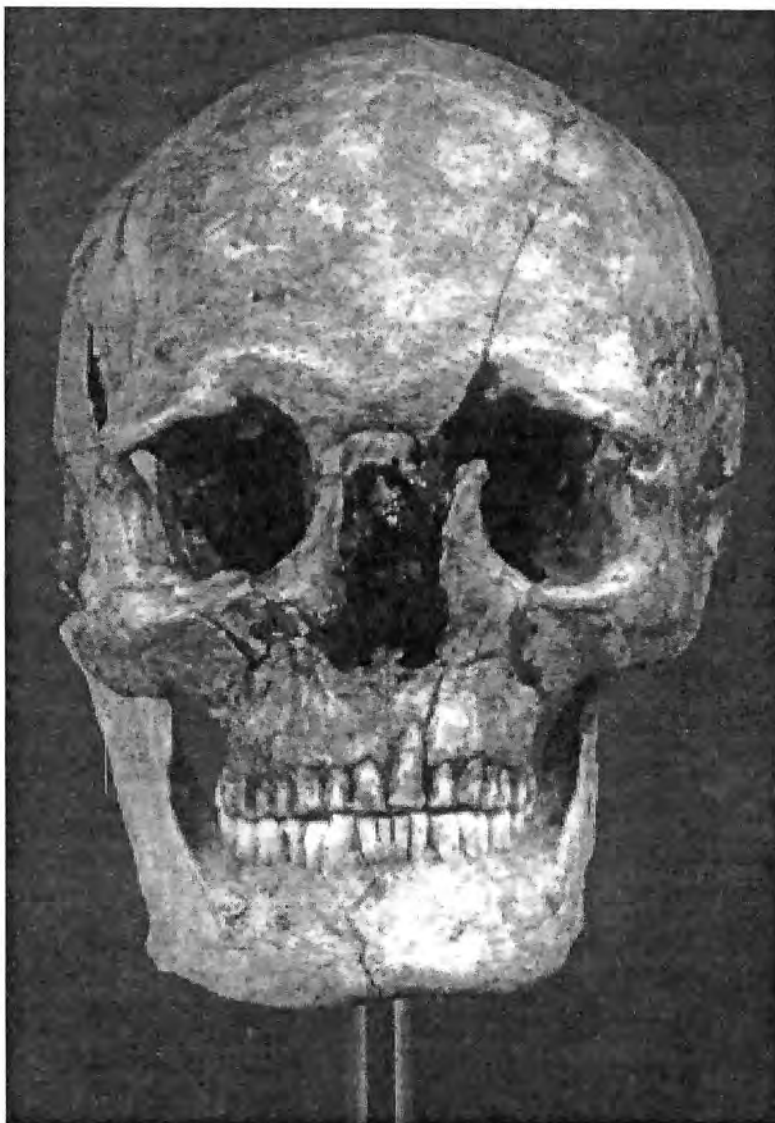


Fig. 3. Hallstatt-Celtic skull 13/1 from Dietfurt in frontal view

tombs of the Etruscans were decorated with wall-paintings, for example with flute players. On the other side, the Celts laid down the deceased on a sofa bed and gave him an amphora with wine and pieces of beef in ceramics, sometimes placed in a wooden car, for his journey from here to there. Further on, the ceramics of the Etruscans was decorated with figures, for example with figures of the marine flora like the well known motive of pirates turned into dolphins. In contrast, the celtic ceramics was decorated with geometric ornaments as it is known from the early Greeks.

The skull with the catalog number Ca1 (Fig. 2) comprises the general outfit of the Etruscan skulls from Corneto-Tarquiniia and is approximately 20 to 30 years old

(for determination of age see 5). Like the other Etruscan skulls of Rostock's anatomical collection its sex is male. It was found in an Etruscan tomb together with a golden earring. In the frontal view, the maximum skull breadth and the bizygomatic breadth are narrow, upper facial height is middle-high, orbital breadth is middle-broad, orbital height is middle-high and nasal height is high — skull measurements according to Martin and Saller [12] were classified according to Breitin er [1]. In the lateral view maximum skull length is middle-long and basion bregma height is low. Taken together, a common feature of this and other Etruscan skulls is that the broad measurements are less developed.

In comparison to an exemplary Hallstatt-Celtic skull from Dietfurt (Fig. 3) in North Bavaria especially maximum skull breadth and minimum frontal breadth show higher values in the Celtic ones. In addition, upper facial height and orbital height are higher in the Celtic specimen compared to the Etruscan ones. In the lateral view the basion bregma height of the Celtic skull is higher in comparison to the Etruscan skull. Due to the aspect of the zygomatic bone, the maxilla and the mandibula the Etruscan skulls are gracile.

Some Hallstatt-Celtic skulls show archaic traits [6], for example, a gable-shaped skull roof, box-shaped orbitae and a right-angled transition of the zygomatic bones into the maxilla.

These features are characteristic for the early specimen of *Homo sapiens sapiens* found in Oberkassel or Cromagnon. However, these archaic traits were missed at the seven Etruscan skulls.

The mediansagittal outlines of the Etruscan skulls were similar to one another. The skull with catalog number Ca4 has a very prominent glabella, therefore the frontal part of its outline is located a little bit outside of the other skulls. By comparison of the mediansagittal outlines of the Etruscan skulls with grouped mediansagittal outline of the male Hallstatt-Celtic skulls of Dietfurt and Schirndorf in North Bavaria it is observed that the Etruscan skulls are smaller and lower than the Hallstatt-Celtics. Additionally, the results of the t-test show in the same direction. The values for maximal skull breadth, minimal frontal breadth, ear bregma height, bizygomatic breadth and orbital breadth are significantly lower at the Etruscan skulls when compared with Hallstatt-Celtic ones of North Bavaria.

It was tried to put the Etruscan skulls in an ethnological grid by comparing them with skeletal remains of the first thousand years BC (7). A metrical comparison of the variables maximum skull breadth and ear bregma height in the Etruscan skulls with contemporary skeletal populations showed that they did not share similarities with Hallstatt-Celtics from North Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg but shared similarities with Hallstatt-Celtics from Hallstatt. Hallstatt-Celtics from Hallstatt are not as robust as Hallstatt-Celtics from North Bavaria. This robusticity is reflected in the fact that Hallstatt-Celtics from North Bavaria have the highest values for maximum skull breadth and ear bregma height among all the skeletal samples.

Among the chronologically adjacent skeletal remains the Etruscan skulls from Tarquinia shared more similarities with Latène-Celtic skulls from Manching than with Early Bronze Age skulls from Mähren. The shorter chronological and geographic distance of Tarquinia from Manching in relation to Mähren seemed to be the reason for the unexpected similarity of the Etruscans from Tarquinia with the Latène-Celtics from Manching.

In conclusion, the Etruscan skulls from Tarquinia were gracile and showed similarities in metrical traits with Hallstatt-Celtic skulls from Hallstatt in Austria and Latène-Celtic skulls from Manching in South Bavaria. Due to these similarities with

neighbouring skeletal remains on the other side of the Alps the hypothesis could be supported that the Etruscan are more original inhabitants of Etruria than immigrant from Asia Minor.

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