

# Blood-Splattered Tunics: Textile Trophies in the Funerary Iconography of Campania and Lucania, Italy, in the 4th Century BC

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**Abstract:** Italic men often are depicted in tomb paintings of the 4th century BC in southwest Italy as mounted and armed warriors returning victorious from disputes with neighbouring communities. These *ritorno del guerriero* scenes also appear in south Italian red-figure vase painting at the same time. The short tunic worn by all warriors in the region was a universal garment, but the tunics were distinguished by decorative borders and applied bands in a great variety of patterns and colours, indicating that there was much scope for personalisation and individualisation in military dress and possibly for indicating family or clan ties. The victors often hold aloft or display on their horses the bloodied tunics as trophies taken from the bodies of their slain enemies. These, along with captured elements of body armour, were symbols of success in battle and proof of the kill, but they also acted as signals of identity and status. After returning home, the victors may have deposited captured tunics and armour in sanctuaries as thank-offerings to the gods for assistance.

**Keywords:** elite textiles, fourth century BC, identities, southern Italy, tomb paintings, trophies, tunics

## Introduction

In the 4th century BC, the Italic peoples in southwest Italy left no written records pertaining to their clothing and *habitus*, but occasionally they created visual records. During that century, members of the upper social strata in Campania and Lucania had themselves depicted in full dress in various situations from life in their funerary paintings.<sup>1</sup> These images were painted shortly before the deceased was laid to rest in a designated tomb and they were visible to family and neighbours during the funeral and until the burial was closed.<sup>2</sup> Representations of people in local dress also appear on contemporary red-figure pottery used in daily life and as provisions in graves. These iconographic sources are a valuable tool for exploring ethnic and cultural identities of the period expressed through dress, especially in view of the dearth of surviving textiles and the lack of texts. In particular, the paintings in chest tombs, semi-chamber tombs and chamber tombs inform us how people wanted to appear in a favourable and socially acceptable light and to be remembered in that way. Clothing, as part of social discourse, played an essential role in self-presentation in this context.<sup>3</sup> This pertains to women as well as men, but in the context of war and conflict it is particularly

relevant for male dress that conveyed the elite status and military exploits of warriors.<sup>4</sup>

Italic men often are depicted as mounted warriors returning victorious from disputes with neighbouring communities, underscoring the importance of the cavalry nobility (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> These *ritorno del guerriero* scenes appear in tomb paintings of the 4th century BC in Capua, Nola and Sarno in Campania and at Paestum in Lucania, and they appear in south Italian red-figure vase painting at the same time. The central item of male dress in all these areas and images was the short-sleeved, short tunic that was slightly longer over the groin; it is broadly similar everywhere in the region, but there are numerous differences in colours and patterns that must have been identity markers recognisable at the time.<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I focus on the tunics worn by the victors and on the tunics taken from the bodies of their slain enemies that were proudly held aloft by the victors on their return. These displayed tunics, along with captured elements of body armour, were symbols of success in battle and proof of the kill, but they also acted as signals of identity and status on various levels.

<sup>4</sup> Discussions of indigenous dress in southern Italy in the period immediately before and in the early years of the Roman conquest have focused largely on the depiction of the so-called Italic warrior; female portrayals have been overlooked, a situation which a new study aims to remedy: Carroll forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolet 1962; Colivicchi 2009; Herring 2018. These are distinct from scenes in which warriors leave their home and wives to depart for battle; in these scenes, there are no trophies because the conflict has not yet taken place.

<sup>6</sup> Weege 1909a: 138 unconvincingly interpreted the slightly longer length over the groin as a sign of prudishness on the part of the wearers, but it may be that this part of the tunic was reinforced or padded to protect the genitals.

<sup>1</sup> The investigation of these tomb paintings is part of the author's research project entitled *Dress and Identity in Early Roman Southwest Italy*, funded by The Leverhulme Trust.

<sup>2</sup> Zuchtriegel 2017: 10-11. The crucial overviews of the painted tombs are Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992 and Benassai 2001.

<sup>3</sup> For recent research on clothing and identity in the Greco-Roman world, see, for example, Lee 2015; Rothe 2012a, 2012b and 2019; Carroll 2015 and 2020.



Figure 1: A victorious warrior is greeted by his wife in a tomb painting from Paestum. A bloodied tunic of a slain enemy is suspended from a bronze belt around the neck of the horse, while a captured bronze belt and shield are carried on the warrior's spears. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 1994.62 (photograph: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

### Samnite and so-called Samnite warriors and their kit

The images in tombs and on vases depict men dressed in clothing and armour that traditionally is known as 'Samnite', in reference to an ethnic group of people originally inhabiting the central mountainous region of southern Italy and later expanding to some extent into Campania to the west and Lucania to the south.<sup>7</sup> Neither Campania, nor Lucania, were part of the homeland region of the Samnites, but the influence of the military dress and weaponry of the Samnites can be detected there. Outside Samnium, these panoplies are perhaps better referred to 'so-called Samnite', a term that will be used in this paper.

Protracted wars between Rome and the Samnites took place between 343 and 290 BC, and because of these conflicts and contact on the battlefield it was the soldiers of the Samnite armies with which the Romans were most familiar.<sup>8</sup> A passage on the appearance

<sup>7</sup> Roman historical sources on their battles against the Samnites will be referred to several times in this paper, simply because they provide useful insight into the preparation and stages of a battle, as well as the aftermath when prisoners and booty were taken. This does not imply that I equate groups in Campania or Lucania with the Samnites. On the Campani, see Mermati 2015; on the Lucani, see Wonder 2015; Isayev 2007: 9-26. Isayev firmly rejects the existence of a 'cohesive and well-defined group' that we might call Lucanians, instead characterising the region as being home to several communities that functioned both independently and collectively. For a discussion of the Samnite wars, see Cornell 2004. On Samnite armour, see Weege 1909b; Robinson 1995. Schneider-Herrmann 1996 seems to group Samnites and Campanians together, without distinction, and uses Campanian red-figure vase painting to discuss attire of men (mostly) and women based on this material.

<sup>7</sup> Suano and Scopacasa 2013; Scopacasa 2014; Tagliamonte 2017.

of the Samnite soldiers is contained in Livy's *Roman History*,<sup>9</sup> written at the end of the 1st century BC or early 1st century AD. He briefly described the armour and coloured and variegated patterns of the Samnites squaring up against the Roman army in 308 BC, and he mentioned this aspect of their appearance again when they fought Rome at Aquilonia in 293 BC.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the Roman sources refer to the garments of Samnite soldiers, they do not describe the clothing and dress customs of peoples in Campania or Lucania, and so we are very fortunate to have the visual sources.

The richness in colour and ornamentation of elite clothing in southern Italy is attested, among other things, by occasional fragments of surviving textiles. Contemporaneous with the tomb and vase paintings are the finely decorated textiles found in a semi-chamber tomb of a warrior of the early decades of the 4th century at Ordona in Apulia, southeast Italy.<sup>11</sup> The elaborate textiles in this man's tomb, possibly from a cloak, were made of fine wool in a twill weave, with decorative bands either woven or embroidered in patterns of meanders, stars and arrows in paler linen thread.<sup>12</sup> This cloak was used to wrap seven broad belts of bronze sheet that belonged to the deceased. Contemporary visual images confirm the general popularity in southern Italy on both sides of the peninsula of a range of colours and patterns on embellished bands and borders on clothing. Such bands, either tablet woven, loom woven, or embroidered, were not only decorative, but also communicated an important message about the status and identity of the wearer.<sup>13</sup> They are technically complex, labour-intensive and time-consuming.<sup>14</sup>

Cloaks with decorated borders worn by warriors are not in evidence in the tomb paintings of southwest Italy, but one exceptionally elaborately clothed warrior on a fourth-century BC tomb painting in Capua wears a cloak that is impressively decorated all over with yellow, red and grey stripes as well as small yellow rosettes (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> Occasionally in a battle scene or a scene of triumphal return a warrior wears a cloak in plain red or white (Figure 1).<sup>16</sup> The men's clothing for which we do

have visual evidence of borders in various motifs and colours are tunics. Both the paintings and the objects buried with the dead confirm that these were worn with a broad bronze belt. These belts consisted of a thin sheet of bronze sewn onto a leather backing through small holes on the edges of the sheet.<sup>17</sup> The belt acted as a status symbol as well as an attribute of the warrior, and it is constantly paired with the other status symbol, the ornate tunic.<sup>18</sup> The value and personal nature of the bronze belt is indicated by the fact that many of the extant examples show evidence of frequent repair.

An examination of the surviving paintings from Campania and Lucania reveals that elite male military attire varied not only from community to community, but also from soldier to soldier. In Capua, the short white tunic is most prevalent; this is either plain or trimmed around the neck with red and is cinched in at the waist by a broad bronze belt.<sup>19</sup> Capuan warriors sometimes wear a so-called Samnite three-disc cuirass or a muscle cuirass, greaves and a helmet with feathers, horns or other adornment. The same outfit is portrayed in red-figure vase paintings from Capuan workshops.<sup>20</sup> Bronze belts like those in the images also are found in male graves at Capua.<sup>21</sup> At Cumae, there are no armed men depicted in the surviving tomb paintings, but warriors in vase paintings produced in the city are armoured and helmeted, as in Capua (Figure 3).<sup>22</sup> Grave goods in Cumae indicate that the bronze belt was an important item of male dress here too.<sup>23</sup> A set of helmet, muscle cuirass, belt, greaves and spear, bought in the 19th century for the Royal Armouries in Leeds, illustrates the panoply of body armour and weapons worn in the 4th century BC by a Cumaean warrior.<sup>24</sup> Warriors from Nola display the greatest variety in tunics, wearing them in red or blue with elaborate borders in white, blue, or red patterns, sometimes with tassels hanging from the short sleeves; these are combined with a broad bronze belt and occasionally with muscle cuirasses and helmets with feathers or horns (Figure 4).<sup>25</sup> The red tunic with scattered blue squares worn by a warrior from Nola-Cimitile in a late-fourth-century BC tomb painting may, perhaps, be a broad reflection of the colourful, variegated dress of the Samnites described by Livy.<sup>26</sup> The few men depicted in tomb paintings in Sarno-Galitta del Capitano (Tomb 1799) wear a plain

<sup>9</sup> Livy 9.40.1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Livy 10.40.13.

<sup>11</sup> Cavallerizza Tomb 382: Catalli *et al.* 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Meo, in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> Gleba 2017b: 1210-1211. Such decorated bands have a much longer history in the costumes of the region, as, for example, the depiction of similar bands and borders on the anthropomorphic Daunian stelae from the mid-7th to the early 5th century BC demonstrate: Norman 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Gleba 2017a.

<sup>15</sup> Benassai 2001: 37-38, cat no. C14, fig. 197. This same warrior wears a white tunic decorated all over in pale grey geometric motifs, including meanders.

<sup>16</sup> This can be worn, for example, over the shoulders to hang down the back (Paestum, Vannullo Tomb 3: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992: 290, 397-398) or slung around the back and draped over both forearms (Paestum, Andriuolo Tomb 12: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992: 100-101, 314-315).

<sup>17</sup> Suano and Scopacasa 2013: 399.

<sup>18</sup> Suano 2000.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Benassai 2001: 22-23, cat. no. C.1, fig. 4-5, 235.

<sup>20</sup> Trendall 1967: 406, no. 302, pl. 159.1, 160.2 (Liberation Painter).

<sup>21</sup> Benassai 2001: 46, cat. no. C.26, fig. 37; 51, cat. no. C.27, fig. 45; 67, cat. no. C.31, fig. 80.

<sup>22</sup> Trendall 1983: 219, cat. no. 104i, pl. 25.6; Trendall 1967: 453, no. 6, pl. 175.1; Trendall 1971: 18, no. 49, fig. 49; Zevi *et al.* 2008: 283-284, fig. 2-3; Valenza Mele 1990: 25, pl. 19.3.

<sup>23</sup> Zevi *et al.* 2008: 271.

<sup>24</sup> Kaminsky 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Benassai 2001: 95-97, cat. no. N.4, fig. 208-211; 99-101, cat. no. N.8, fig. 212-221.

<sup>26</sup> Benassai 2001: 99-101, 200-204, cat. no. N.8, fig. 219.



Figure 2: A victorious warrior with an elaborate tunic and cape in a tomb painting from Capua (drawing: adapted by B. Carroll).

white tunic or, in one case, a turquoise-blue tunic with white and pale blue checks or stripes around the neck and on the hem (Figure 5).<sup>27</sup> Warriors in Paestum are dressed in white or red tunics with patterned or plain borders in red, white or black on the neckline, sleeves

and hem, and a broad bronze belt; they wear armour, namely the Samnite three-disc cuirass or a muscle breastplate, greaves and a helmet with feathers and a crest (Figure 6).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Tomb 12 and Andriuolo Tomb of 1937: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992: 100–101, 314–316; 204–205, 352. A full set of armour and weapons



Figure 3: Trophies from the enemy include a bloodied tunic and two greaves suspended from two spears.  
Red-figure hydria from Cumae (photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, László Mátyus).



Figure 4: Tomb painting from Nola-Cimitile depicting victorious warriors in coloured tunics. The warrior at the head of the procession carries the tunic of a slain enemy on his spear (photograph: Bridgeman Images, LRI4592510).



Figure 5: Painting in Tomb 1799 from Sarno-Galitta del Capitano, depicting a warrior in a blue tunic carrying a captured striped tunic and shield of an enemy (photograph: M. Carroll, by permission of the Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Campania).

There can be little doubt that textiles such as these tunics communicated social status, and although they are largely similar in shape, length and form throughout southwest Italy, they are distinguished by borders and applied bands in various patterns and colours. There is no evidence for uniforms that, for example, all Nolan or Capuan soldiers wore, let alone for a national Campanian or Lucanian livery. The tunic itself is recognisable as so-called Samnite or common

can be found in many of the tomb assemblages of men, including Gaudio Tomb 2/1957 which contained a helmet, a muscle cuirass, a pair of greaves, two belts and various weapons: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992: 380-385. For a three-disc cuirass and other armour at Paestum, see Porta Aurea 2 tomb: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992: 363-364.

to various groups, but there was great variety. Some motifs, such as stripes, dots, or wave patterns might seem rather generic, but it is the evident variety in combination of motifs and colours result in widespread diversity (Figure 7).<sup>29</sup> The variety in tunics, particularly their decoration and adornment, conceivably could connote rank within the troops.<sup>30</sup> On a red-figure *kratēr* by the Astarita Painter from Capua, for example, two warriors with a short tunic, belt, helmet, spear and shield appear; the central male who is taller (and

<sup>29</sup> Burns 2005: 360-368, fig. 72-79, has a handy overview of tunic patterns and colours in line drawings, which Fig. 7 here has taken further.

<sup>30</sup> This was suggested by Rouveret and Pontrandolfo 1983: 111.



Figure 6: Painting in Tomb 58 from Paestum-Andriuolo showing a warrior in full panoply and dress (photograph: Alamy, Image ID: PPBCMF).

older?), to whom a libation is offered, wears a more ornately decorated tunic than his companion; their shields also vary in decoration (Figure 8).<sup>31</sup> The taller man also wears a fluttering cloak and greaves, unlike the other figure. This differentiation between status, and perhaps age, is apparent in many of the images in which one primary or older warrior seems to be the focus of attention.

It seems more likely, however, that the decoration we see was something personal to the wearer and his immediate surroundings. The men from individual communities in Campania and Lucania, especially from elite families, as depicted in the tomb paintings, will have been responsible for their own kit, including their tunics, just as the early Roman forces in the 5th and 4th centuries BC were.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes, totally unique motifs can be seen on tunics, supporting the idea of individualism

<sup>31</sup> Shield adornment includes the depiction, for example, of geese, lions, star patterns, vegetal motifs, stripes and stars.

<sup>32</sup> Iancu 2025.

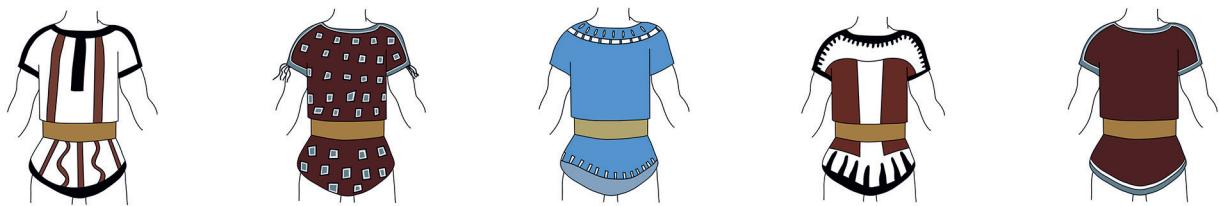


Figure 7: Selection of Campanian and Lucanian men's tunics. From left to right: Paestum, Nola, Sarno, Paestum and Nola (drawing: M. Kays).



Figure 8: Campanian red-figure *kratēr* depicting two warriors in decorated tunics, belts and armour (photograph: Sotheby's).

and personalisation. This is the case, for example, with a white tunic decorated with red flying birds that is worn by a duelling man in Tomb 1 at Paestum-Arcioni; even his shield has heraldic birds (geese?) with flapping wings on it (Figure 9). I have demonstrated elsewhere that a woman's origin and membership in a particular community in southwest Italy could be recognised by her clothing and headdress that distinguished her from women from other communities, be it Nola, Sarno, Capua, Cumae, or Paestum; but, in addition to this, the patterns and motifs on female clothing of the period

could be important markers of distinction and even of kinship or specific to family groups.<sup>33</sup> If identities were formed and expressed through clothing on a relatively local, rather than on a large scale or 'national' level, which we can demonstrate for women, the same could be true of male military dress in which there was much scope for personalisation.

<sup>33</sup> Carroll forthcoming.



Figure 9: Paestan man wearing a white tunic decorated with red birds on the torso and carrying a shield adorned with geese, from Tomb 1 at Paestum-Arcioni (photograph: Alamy, Image ID: 2T112W5).

### Textile trophies of war

The tunic as a trophy often accompanies other spoils of war such as a shield, greaves, or spears of a killed opponent, but it is the combination of tunic and broad bronze belt that is most symbolic of the elite warrior on either side of any conflict. This explains why these items in particular are displayed proudly by the victor as proof of the kill of a perhaps equally elite opponent who once owned them.

The captured tunic is displayed in 30 tomb paintings in one of two ways (Table 1). It is either slung over a spear carried by the mounted victorious warrior on his shoulder, with the spear pushed through the arm and neck holes, or it is suspended from a captured enemy bronze belt around the neck of the victor's horse or simply tied around the horse's neck.

The tunic hanging from a spear appears 16 times in all, seven times at Capua, six times at Paestum, twice in the same tomb in Nola-Cimitile and once at Sarno.

Table 1: Overview of tomb paintings with depictions of victorious warriors returning with textile trophies. P-R = Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992.

Tunic placement	Site	Tomb	Clean	Bloodied	Other trophies	Source	Fig. here
Tunic / spear	Capua	unknown		yes	belt	Benassai C.13	
	Capua	unknown		possibly	belt, shield	Benassai C.15	
	Capua	unknown	yes		belt, shield, greave?	Benassai C.16	
	Capua	unknown		yes	belt (also bloodied)	Benassai C.17	
	Capua	unknown		yes	belt	Benassai C.18	
	Capua	Ponte S. Prisco T3	?	?	no	Benassai C.26	
	Capua	Ponte S. Prisco T13	yes		belt	Benassai C.30	Fig. 10
	Nola	Cimitile	yes		belt	Benassai N.8	Fig. 4
	Nola	Cimitile	yes		no	Benassai N.8	
	Sarno	Galitta Capitano T1799	yes		shield		Fig. 5
	Paestum	Andriuolo T61		yes	shield	P-R 118-119	Fig. 11
	Paestum	Andriuolo T86	yes		belt	P-R 162-163	
	Paestum	Andriuolo T1937	yes		belt, shield	P-R 204-205	
	Paestum	Andriuolo T114		yes	shield	P-R 177	
	Paestum	Vannullo T3	yes		shield + unident. object	P-R 290	
	Paestum	unknown		yes	greaves		Fig. 13
Tunic / horse	Nola	Via Seminario		yes	belt	Benassai N.4	Fig. 12
	Nola	Via Seminario		yes	belt	Benassai N.4	
	Sarno	Galitta Capitano T1799	yes		shield carried		Fig. 5
	Sarno	Galitta Capitano T1799	yes		no		
	Paestum	Andriuolo T61		yes	belt?	P-R 118-119	
	Paestum	Andriuolo T86		yes	belt; tunic, belt carried	P-R 162-163	
	Paestum	Agropoli T11/1967		yes	belt; shield carried	P-R 248	
	Paestum	Gaudio T1/1972		yes	belt; shield carried	P-R 257	
	Paestum	Sequestro Finanza T1		yes	belt; belt, shield carried	P-R 298	
	Paestum	Vannullo T4		yes	belt, greave, shield carried	P-R 286-287	
	Paestum	Laghetto TLXIV		yes	belt; shield carried	P-R 209	
	Paestum	? NY MMA 1994.62		yes	belt; belt, shield carried	MMA website	Fig. 1
	Paestum	Spinazzo Tomba Finanza		yes	belt	D'Angelo 86	
	Paestum	Spinazzo Weege 31	?	?	belt	D'Angelo 81	

The Capuan examples all date to the second half of the 4th century, particularly to the last quarter; the other examples from Nola, Sarno and Paestum range from c. 375 BC to the early 3rd century. The textile trophies in Capua usually are quite ornate, consisting of a white tunic with red borders, or with vertical stripes,

meanders and dots of various colours, including red, yellow, grey and blue (Figure 10); three of these are clearly blood-spattered. The suspended tunics at Paestum are either plain white or white with red or black bands; three are blood-spattered (Figure 11). The captured tunic in Sarno is red and white striped.



Figure 10: Returning warrior from Capua carrying a tunic in red, blue and white stripes and a belt taken from an enemy, Tomb 14 Ponte S. Prisco (photograph: M. Carroll, by permission of the Museo Archeologico dell'Antica Capua, Santa Maria Capua Vetere).



Figure 11: Detail of a painting in Tomb 61 at Paestum-Andriuolo, showing a warrior with bloodied tunics taken from slain enemies on the horse's neck and on carried spears (photograph: Alamy, Image ID: HHB6XX).

The most ornate captured tunic appears in the tomb painting from Nola-Cimitile, dating to c. 330-320 BC. The male warrior walking at the head of a procession here carries a white tunic with large red and blue panels on the body and with red tassels hanging from the sleeves and hem of the garment (Figure 4). All but three of these textile trophies are combined with a captured belt hanging from the warrior's spear.

The tunic hanging from a captured bronze belt around the neck of a horse, or simply tied around its neck, appears 14 times, most commonly at Paestum (with 10 examples), Nola-Via Seminario (twice in one tomb, Figure 12) and in Sarno Galitta del Capitano (twice in one tomb) in the period from shortly before the middle of the 4th century to the early 3rd century BC. Most of these tunics are white, sometimes with red trim, and have splashes of blood on them (Figure 1), although the examples at Sarno do not and the nineteenth-century drawing of a returning warrior at Paestum-Spinazzo is very basic and this detail is not clear.<sup>34</sup> These have been misinterpreted as a caparison or protective cloth for the horse; accordingly, the blood stains on the textile

was thought to be oozing from a wound on the chest of the horse.<sup>35</sup> However, the bronze belt around the horse's neck is so clearly a man's belt that it is hard to imagine that the textile trophy hanging from it should not be a man's tunic, as this is the typical combination of attire stripped from an enemy. At Paestum, there are double signs of triumph for some individual warriors in that a bloodied tunic is draped from the horses' neck and a second one is carried on a spear by the victor on the same horse (Figure 13).<sup>36</sup>

In contemporary Campanian red-figure scenes on ceramic vessels made in Capua and Cumae, the *ritorno del guerriero* also is present, occasionally including the depiction of trophies and spoils of war. In fact, some of these scenes relay the moments of battle when prisoners were taken captive and their equipment confiscated. On a red-figure *hydria* by the Triumph Painter in the Museo Campano in Capua, for example, two warriors on foot each have a spear from which trophies are suspended, a shield and greave in one case,

<sup>34</sup> Weege 1909a: 117-118; D'Angelo 2017: 81.

<sup>35</sup> Benassai 2001: 97.

<sup>36</sup> Andriuolo Tomb 61: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992, 118-119, 324-326. Andriuolo Tomb 86: Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1992, 162-163, 339-340.



Figure 12: Victorious warrior in a blue tunic with a bloodied enemy tunic on his horse's neck, Tomb Nola-Via Seminario (photograph: M. Carroll, by permission of the Ministero della Cultura, Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Napoli).

and a tunic, belt and helmet (?) in the other; a disarmed and bound prisoner who has been stripped of armour is led away on the right (Fig. 14).<sup>37</sup> On another red-figure *hydria* from Cumae by the Boston Ready Painter, various individuals at different points in a battle are portrayed.<sup>38</sup> Some soldiers engage in single combat with each other, two others lie dead without their armour or weapons, and a third soldier retreats carrying a spear from which a captured belt and tunic dangle. After

the battle, a warrior returns on his horse to his family and community, as shown on a *hydria* from Cumae in Budapest (Figure 3).<sup>39</sup> This warrior has brought home two spears with two greaves and a bloodied tunic decorated with a swastika, a motif that is known also on a tunic painted on the walls of a tomb at San Nicola di Albanella near Paestum.<sup>40</sup> The spoils seem to be

<sup>37</sup> Weege 1909a: 138–139, fig. 15; Mingazzini 1935: 5–6, pl. 7–8.

<sup>38</sup> Zevi et al. 2008: 283–284, fig. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Treadall 1967: 480, no. 289, pl. 186.3 (attributed to the CA Painter); Szilágyi 1981: 98–101, pl. 46.1, 46.4 (attributed to the LNO Painter).

<sup>40</sup> In the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, recorded by the author March 2023. The swastika also appears on tunics and cloaks in painted tombs in Capua: Benassai 2001: 24, cat. no. C3, fig. 7; 61–62,



Figure 13: Returning mounted warrior whose valour is represented by the bloodied tunics on his spears and his horse's neck, Paestum Tomb. The slain warrior's greaves are also suspended from the spears (photograph: Alamy, Image ID: RYEHKM).

suspended above and behind the warrior, as if fixed to a wall, but objects often 'float' in the background of scenes on vases (see below), so this is uncertain.

The tunics stripped from the bodies of the enemy almost always are different from the ones the victors wear, although sometimes the quality and preservation of the paintings make it difficult to see great detail. The Nola-Cimitile painting (Figure 4) is the clearest evidence for the great diversity apparent in the tunics worn by Nolan soldiers, and the very well-preserved and highly ornate captured tunic carried by the lead man in the procession is unlike any of those worn by the returning soldiers.

Captured prisoners and seized horses of the enemy forces, depicted on a few tomb paintings and vases, are likely to have been of greater economic value than trophies. But metal spoils such as weaponry, bronze belts and other items had both monetary and symbolic value. These could be dedicated in a sanctuary as a thank offering, as Livy tells us the Romans did with their Samnite spoils;<sup>41</sup> he specifically refers to the splendid gold- and silver-embossed shields of the

Samnites as, in fact, 'spoil rather than armour....soon becoming disfigured amid blood and wounds', and he refers to 'heaps of bodies and splendid armour' on the battlefield, ripe for the taking.<sup>42</sup> Several of the depicted shields and belts taken as booty have been damaged by driving a spear right through them, so they do appear as spoil rather than as objects targeted for reuse (see Figure 3, for example). At the sanctuary at Pietrabbondante, where Samnite communities centrally gathered possibly already from the late 5th century BC, helmets, belts and weaponry of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC were recovered, some of the pieces of equipment, such as three-disc cuirasses and helmet cheek-pieces, having been fixed to a support with nails for their display.<sup>43</sup> Other dedications at local shrines, as yet undiscovered, are likely. But textile trophies that might have been deposited at Pietrabbondante or in any sanctuary in Campania or Lucania do not leave a trace archaeologically. Metal equipment could also be melted down and turned into something else, as the Romans did with Samnite armour captured in 293 BC, transforming breastplates, greaves and helmets into a statue of Jupiter in Rome.<sup>44</sup>

cat. no. 30, fig. 205.

<sup>41</sup> Livy 10.46.

<sup>42</sup> Livy 9.40.4, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Tagliamonte 2002-2003; La Regina 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Plin. HN 34.18.



Figure 14: Red-figure *hydria* from Capua depicting two soldiers with spears from which trophies – shield, greave, tunic, belt and helmet – are suspended. A disarmed and bound prisoner who has been stripped of armour is led away on the right (photograph: Bridgeman Images, DGA2564286).

On the other hand, trophies potentially might have been used to decorate the homes of the elite who had shown valour in battle, if we look to Republican Rome for a comparison. Livy referred to those noble Romans chosen for the new senate after the battle of Cannae in 216 BC who 'had the spoils of an enemy set up in their houses' (*spolia ex hoste*).<sup>45</sup> Pliny the Elder, too, mentions how the ancestors of Rome fastened spoils taken from the enemy outside their houses and around their doorways.<sup>46</sup> These *spolia*, primarily captured shields, remained in sight and were not removed, even if the house changed ownership, eternally celebrating a triumph; the normal place for the display and consecration of *spolia*, however, was in the context of public architecture and spaces.<sup>47</sup> There is no visual evidence of displaying *spolia* in houses in the tomb paintings of the 4th century BC, but Campanian vase painters from Capua sometimes depict windows and what appear to be half-shields and other motifs (rosettes, garlands, *phialai*) at the top of the painted

panels showing the departure (rather than the return) of the warrior and other non-military activities (see Figure 8).<sup>48</sup> Whether these half-shields really are meant to allude to *spolia* set up in domestic settings, perhaps from previous battles, we cannot tell. Since they appear also floating in the background of scenes where the warrior clearly is outside a building and standing next to his horse or leaning against a rock or standing on uneven terrain, however, a certain amount of scepticism about the half-shield or shield as a trophy in a domestic context is warranted.<sup>49</sup>

The tomb paintings in southwest Italy show beyond doubt that the decorated tunics were valuable items of dress, and it is, therefore, not surprising that they frequently were taken as a prize of war. They were indicative of victory over a foe slain in close personal combat, and they had a great symbolic value for that

<sup>45</sup> Livy 23.23.6.

<sup>46</sup> Plin. *HN* 35.2.7.

<sup>47</sup> Rawson 1991; Welch 2006 (who includes also non-military booty); Rutledge 2012: 123–158.

<sup>48</sup> Trendall 1967: 400, no. 273, pl. 156.4; 406, no. 301, pl. 160.1 (Astarita Painter); Trendall 1989: 165–166, fig. 299, 301 (Astarita Painter, Libation Painter).

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, a red-figure vessel by the Manchester Painter in Naples: Trendall 1967: 415, no. 362, pl. 167.3–4; and others by the Libation painter in Paris and in Santa Maria Capua Vetere: Trendall 1967: 406, no. 301, pl. 160.1; 406, no. 300, pl. 159.4–5.

reason.<sup>50</sup> Samnite soldiers stripped of their weapons and battle dress were led under the yoke of Rome in 307 BC, for example, and were 'dismissed wearing a single garment', implying they were left with a simple garment with little or no value, unlike the costly decorated textiles they wore in combat.<sup>51</sup> It may also have been the case in conflicts of the 4th century BC among neighbouring groups in southwest Italy that less valuable garments remained on the living prisoner of war or on the corpse of the vanquished.<sup>52</sup> But what happened to the textile trophies, as opposed to metal arms and armour, like those displayed in the tomb and vase paintings? Given that the tunics are personal items that distinguished the wearer from others, it is unlikely that they would have been worn or reused by the victor after removal from an enemy corpse, especially if they were blood-stained or damaged. There is no surviving evidence to suggest that non-metal spoils, such as captured tunics, were attached to the houses of the victors and they certainly would not have survived to 'eternally' celebrate a triumph, as Pliny the Elder writes in the context of Republican Rome (see above). However, we know from Greek and Roman written and visual sources that clothing and textiles of many kinds were deposited in sanctuaries as thank-offerings marking the successful transition from one stage in a life course to another, such as childbirth, the dedication of a child, or the passage from puberty to adulthood.<sup>53</sup> The funerary iconography in Campania and Lucania cannot tell us with certainty what happened to the captured and displayed tunics and textile spoils of war once they were brought home, but it is strong possibility that they were dedicated to the gods in thanks for a successful outcome in battle.

### Conclusions

In the paintings in their tombs, elite warriors in Campania and Lucania celebrated their victory over the enemy for eternity by being depicted in their military garb and weapons and proudly displaying the captured tunics and arms stripped from those they killed in battle. Elite male military attire varied considerably. The short tunic was a universal garment worn by men everywhere, but tunics were distinguished by decorative borders and applied bands in a great variety of patterns and colours, indicating that there was much scope for personalisation and individualisation in male military dress and, perhaps, for indicating family or clan ties. The tunic and the broad bronze belt that we see in the visual depictions in tombs and on ceramics were symbolic of the elite warrior on either side of any conflict, explaining why both items are displayed

proudly by the victor as proof of the kill of an opponent who once owned them. Captured tunics slung over a spear carried by the mounted victorious warrior or suspended from the neck of the victor's horse are often blood-spattered, having been stripped from the body of an enemy foe. These textile trophies were symbolic of a man's valour and prowess in conflict. They were keenly displayed after the triumph and possibly deposited as thank offerings for military success in relevant sanctuaries. Although no trace of them survives in such contexts, unlike captured metal weapons and armour, the images preserved in tomb and vase paintings in the 4th century BC attest to the role and value of decorated elite textiles as status garments and as a display of personal identities.

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<sup>50</sup> Gleba 2014: 83–89.

<sup>51</sup> Livy 9.42.7.

<sup>52</sup> Iancu, in this volume.

<sup>53</sup> Cleland 2005; Niels 2009; Brøns 2015 and 2016; Carroll 2019: 14–15.

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