

ITALIC BRONZE ANATOMICAL CUIRASS

Italic, 4th century B.C.

Bronze

H: 35.8 cm

Reference: 24939



reference 2439

Both shells, very similar in size, are finely modeled and represent in a realistic manner – as if it were a genuine sculpture – the muscles of a warrior's upper torso, from the neck, marked by a small angular edge, virtually down to the navel, which is not visible. Divided by the vertical *linea alba*, the two halves of the chest are practically symmetrical, with the rounded pectoral muscles, the prominent nipples (each rendered as a disk in relief, surrounded by dots, with a central knob), the abdominal muscles and the ribs whose rough surfaces create a balanced *chiaroscuro* effect. In the back, on both sides of the dorsal groove, the modeling of the musculature is a little less detailed but still reflects the strength and vigor of the soldier. Fastened with two rivets on the right shoulder is a small serpentine stem terminating in a snake's head passing through a loop; this element was probably part of the closure system which served to hold both bronze plates together.

These two plates compose the main parts of an anatomical cuirass, an essential element in the defensive armament of Classical and Hellenistic soldiers. Such armor was known as anatomical because of the relief representing a male torso in a highly realistic or a more stylized manner. Unlike the Greek cuirass, which descended lower and covered much of the belly, the Italic type of cuirass was shorter and designed to be worn with a broad bronze belt, often found in tombs with the other elements of the panoply (greaves, helmet, etc. see n. 4). The two shells of the Italic cuirass, less rounded and narrower, would have been completed by side plates (made of bronze or leather), intended to protect the sides and the underarm area of the warrior. The frequent presence of small perforations along the edges indicates that the armor was lined with leather, which made it more comfortable to wear. This example belongs to a relatively homogeneous group of short cuirasses, manufactured in the 4th century B.C. and probably produced in southern Italian workshops, which were worn mainly by Samnite,

Lucanian, Apulian and even Etruscan warriors. Most often discovered in tombs of the late Classical period and early Hellenism, such armor was also used to indicate the social status of its owner. This type of cuirass is often depicted in Italic (Paestum) and Etruscan funeral paintings, as well as on contemporary red-figure pottery, in fight scenes and cavalry parades.

CONDITION

Anatomical cuirass featuring two cast bronze plates hammered for better protection against knocks and blows. Repairs on both elements; lateral closure system (hinges, hooks) now lost. Reddish brown colored metal largely covered with a dark green patina and encrustations.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Professor A. Goumaz Collection, Switzerland, 1960's.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BURNS M., *Graeco-Italic Militaria*, in MERRONY M., *Mougins Museum of Classical Art*, Mougins, 2011, pp. 222 ss.

GUZZO P.G., *Su una corazza dalla Magna Grecia*, in *Museum Helveticum*, 38, 1981, pp. 54-61.

ZIMMERMANN J.-L., *L'armure en bronze de Malibu*, in *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 10, 1982 (especially p. 140, notes 112-114).