



Type: Crater of Aristonothos  
 Findspot: Caere (Italy)  
 Chronology: 7<sup>th</sup> century BC  
 Actual location: Capitoline Museums, Rome (Italy)

The crater (large vase used for mixing wine, water and spices during the symposium) was produced and painted by Aristonothos, who signed his name on it. It was likely produced at *Cumae*, the first Greek colony in mainland Italy, founded by settlers from Euboea during the 8th century BC. It was found at *Caere*, one of the largest and most important Etruscan cities. The inscription mentioning the potter and painter Aristonothos is in Greek and uses the Euboean version of the Greek alphabet and likely an Ionian dialect (a type of ancient Greek dialect). The scene on the vase represents the blinding of Polyphemus and is derived from one of the key episodes of the *Odyssey*.

The presence of artefacts such as this reveals aspects of the cultural life of Greek settlements in Italy, for example, the role of poems such as the *Odyssey* in framing a mythical past for sea travels and the associated perils that took place at the time. It also provides an insight in the complex cultural relationship between the Greeks and the indigenous people of Italy: how far for example was the Etruscan owner of the vase able to understand the story that was represented on the vase? And what role had the crater and its decoration in the context of Etruscan society at *Caere*?

### MY RESEARCH

How far does the presence of Greek artefacts in native contexts in Italy reflect the cultural impact of Greek colonization? What can artefacts like this tell us about the cultural context in which they were produced? What role had poems like the *Odyssey* in Greek colonization?