



# Forum Antike

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## **War and Warriors in Etruria: Contextualizing the Haspnas Helmets from Vetulonia**

Approximately 150 bronze helmets, the largest known cache of Etruscan helmets, were discovered in a sacred deposit at Vetulonia in 1905. Why were so many of these helmets found in one place, and why might they have been dedicated?

These helmets represent not only a large, singular deposit of Etruscan armor, but they also stand out due to the two sets of inscriptions that some of these helmets bear – a series of numerical inscriptions and a series inscribed with the family name of *Haspnaś*.

An analysis of the numerical inscriptions that appear on a few of these helmets allows us to explore not only why these helmets were inscribed but helps us to learn more about these helmets and the men that once wore them. The examination of this extraordinary group of helmets from Vetulonia not only allows for a better understanding of the helmets themselves, but also provides an opportunity to use these helmets as an explanatory pathway to understand what a soldier did with his armor when not at war: did he store it somewhere? Did he dedicate it to the gods? At the end of his life, did he bury it in his tomb? Taken together, the inscribed helmets and the evidence they provide of their one-time owners and users offers insights into the life and experience of the Etruscan warrior, one that can be revealed by means of understanding the lives of these objects.