

DE GRUYTER

REFERENCE

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# ETRUSCOLOGY

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## 1 Introduction

The only reasonable solution is to dismember the [computer] manuals, study them for six months under the guidance of an Etruscologist, condense them into four file cards (which will be enough), and throw the originals away.

U. Eco, "How to Follow Instructions" (1994, 141)

### 1 Why Etruscans and Etruscology?

Although the Etruscans are the third ancient civilization in western Europe after Greece and Rome, in contemporary culture they are almost a synonym for mystery, and Etruscologists are thought to be able to solve mysteries—as Umberto Eco ironically confirms.<sup>1</sup> In European culture this opinion is deeply rooted. The Greek historians Herodotus (fifth century BCE) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BCE) raised the Etruscan question and attempted to clarify the mysterious origins and language of this people in two different ways—the first declaring origins among the Lydians, the second among the Italics. This situation was exacerbated by later events. The twenty books of *Tyrrhenika*, "Etruscan matters," written in Greek by the Roman emperor Claudius (10 BCE–54 CE), as well as other ancient texts on the Etruscans, are lost, and this is not by accident. For several reasons, Christian authors identified the Etruscans as pagans, and monks in the Middle Ages deliberately did not copy Greek and Roman literature on non-Christian peoples. This situation changed in the late Middle Ages and especially in the Renaissance, when Etruscan objects and monuments came to light and archaeology began to play the primary role in defining the Etruscans. Details of Etruscan sepulchers were drawn by the two greatest artists of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564). Etruscan studies were carried out especially in Italy, but not exclusively by Italian scholars; the first modern book was written in Latin by the Scottish humanist Thomas Dempster in the seventeenth century and was published a hundred years later in Florence.<sup>2</sup> Its publication increased the fascination with the Etruscans in the eighteenth century and spawned *Etruscheria* ("Etruscomania"), the amateur passion for them.

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<sup>1</sup> See for English <http://www.mysteriousetruscans.com/library.html> (accessed April 27, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Th. Dempster, *De Etruria regali libri VII*, vols. 1–2. Florentiae 1723–1724: apud Joannem Cajetanum Tartinium.

A scientific development closely connected with Italian culture followed the early interest in *Etruscheria*. An important step was the Chair of Archaeology established in 1810 at the University of Perugia and maintained until 1877, dealing with Greek, Etruscan, and Roman archaeology.<sup>3</sup>

Interest in the “mysterious” Etruscans in the following years suffered long breaks, interrupted by important archaeological discoveries, such as the temple and statues found at Veii from 1914 onward, which helped arouse interest and establish modern Etruscan studies. Modern Etruscan studies are closely connected with the name of Massimo Pallottino (1909–1995), who held the Chair of Etruscology at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” from 1942 to 1980 and founded Etruscology as a modern scientific discipline. He was the acknowledged authority in studies of pre-Roman Italy not only in his own country but all over the world, founding and leading a summer school in Etruscology and Italic studies reserved for non-Italian scholars at the University for Foreigners of Perugia. In Pallottino’s view, Etruscology and Etruscologists study every aspect of Etruscan culture—as Egyptology and Egyptologists do for Egyptian culture—literacy tradition, inscriptions, art, archaeology, and so on, which are used to construct a general historical framework. The Etruscologist is mostly a historian. Pallottino expressed his thoughts in a major work, *Etruscologia*, which was firstly published in 1942 by the established Italian publisher Hoepli, famous for its series of handbooks. Over the next four decades, the book underwent six new editions, each one systematically revised by the author, which made it the standard work on the subject.<sup>4</sup> After Pallottino’s death, *Etruscologia* was reprinted in Italy in 2006. The comprehensive text, which has been translated into all the major languages of Europe (English, French, German, and Spanish, plus Hungarian, Polish, and Portuguese) and has been adopted by several generations of Etruscology students, was a milestone not only for the subject, but also for Italian culture. The availability of such an important book influenced the publication of further volumes on Etruscan culture, in all major languages by many authors. The constant increase in specialization and the incessant progress of archaeological discoveries have by now made it impossible for a single scholar to control all the information and to write a comprehensive text; it is no accident that the volume intended to update *Etruscologia* is written by eleven authors under the direction of Gilda Bartoloni, a pupil of Pallottino.<sup>5</sup> The best way to satisfy the universal interest in the “mysterious” Etruscans is an exhaustive book covering them in English.

Several general books on Etruscans, including the first dictionary, have recently been published in English and confirm that large publishing projects are still a very

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3 *Erudizione e antiquaria a Perugia nell'Ottocento*, edited by L. Polverini. Naples 1998: ESI.

4 M. Pallottino, *Etruscologia*. Milan 1942: Hoepli, 7th ed. 1984, latest reprint, 2006.

5 *Introduzione all'etruscologia*, edited by G. Bartoloni. Milan 2011: Hoepli.

modern way to disseminate archaeological results.<sup>6</sup> Some recent books are similar in certain respects to the present one. The large number of contributors and their international provenance reflect the high level of specialization and the worldwide undertaking of research on the Etruscans. Some statistics may be of interest: sixty-seven authors from eleven countries have written ninety chapters (three have two authors). If the sixty-seven authors are divided by nationality, thirty-nine are from Italy, seven from France, six from Austria, four from the United States, three from Switzerland, two each from England and Germany, and one each from Lithuania, Spain, Sweden, and the Netherlands. If the sixty-seven authors are divided by institution, thirty-one are from Italian institutions, eight from French, seven from Austrian, five from American, four from German, two each from English and Swiss, and one each from Canadian, Dutch, and Swedish universities; five authors are independent scholars. Thus geographic mobility slightly changes the picture of nationality, and although Italian scholars are the most prolific and mobile, Etruscology is an international matter. If the ninety chapters are divided by institution, forty are from Italian institutions, thirteen from Austrian, eleven from French, eight from American, four from German, three from English, two each from Dutch and Swiss, and one each from Canadian and Swedish universities; five are by independent scholars. Similar results can be reached if the ninety chapters are divided by author's nationality: fifty-five are by Italians, ten by French contributors, eight by Austrians, six by Americans; and three each by English and Swiss, two each by Dutch and German, and one each by Lithuanian, Spanish, and Swedish authors. Scholars in Etruscology are thus disseminated all over the world, but they are concentrated in Italy, followed by France and Austria. This is not an accident, but corresponds exactly to the chairs of Etruscology in the universities of these nations. Twenty-eight Etruscologists form a special group in the Italian academic system of *Scienze dell'Antichità*, and in the 2014–2015 academic year they were active in twenty-two universities.<sup>7</sup> Although Etruscology chairs have not been established in France, where research on Etruscan culture is traditionally carried out by Classical philologists, lectures on Etruscan archaeology are held at the *École du Louvre* in Paris; at the University of Vienna in Austria a chair of *Etruskologie und Italische Altertumskunde* has been established. In England, a Sybille Haynes Lectureship in Etruscan and Italic Archaeology was recently created at the University of Oxford. Two positions—in Germany at the University of Tübingen and in Belgium at the University of Louvain la Neuve—have no longer been active in Etruscology. It must

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6 S. Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization. A Cultural History*, London and Los Angeles 2000, British Museum Press and the J. Paul Getty Trust 2000; S. Stoddart, *Historical dictionary of the Etruscans*, Lanham, MD 2009, Scarecrow Press; *The Etruscan world*, edited by J. MacIntosh Turfa, London 2013, Routledge; *A Companion to the Etruscans*, edited by S. Bell and A. A. Carpino, Chichester, West Sussex 2016, Wiley Blackwell.

7 The number of Etruscologists in Italy affiliated with the sector called L-ANT/06 will probably decrease in coming years as retiring scholars are not replaced.

be added that scholars from several countries are mainly concerned with the Etruscans but officially teach other archaeological disciplines: the present editor held from 2008 to 2015 the chair of *Ur- und Frühgeschichte* at an Institute with a long tradition of research on Iron Age Italy.<sup>8</sup>

Other institutions focusing on the Etruscans may be mentioned, such as the *Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo Antico* of the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* (Rome) and the *Unité Mixte de Recherche Archéologie et Philologie d'Orient et d'Occident* supported by the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* and the *École Normale Supérieure* (Paris). The leading institution in Etruscan studies, the *Istituto Nazionale di Studi Etruschi e Italici*, founded in 1925 in Florence, which has published the journal *Studi Etruschi* since 1927, organizes scientific symposia, and includes sections in Austria, France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>9</sup>

This wide range of scientific activity allows us to conclude that the Etruscans may be mysterious primarily for publishers and readers, both of whom love mysteries.

## 2 Authors and structure of the book

If Pallottino as founder of modern Etruscology and his immediate pupils formed respectively the first and second academic generations of Etruscologists, the scholars on duty in this book—including the present editor and most of its authors—are the third and fourth generations, with some second generation exceptions. The aim of such a balanced mixture between innovation and tradition is an up-to-date and reliable handbook. The choice of author for each contribution followed three distinct principles. First, several Etruscologists have been asked to deal with subjects that are quite new for them, to augment their interest and to avoid routine chapters. Second, some scholars have been invited to contribute to this book even though they were not specifically interested in Etruscan subjects, because they have new approaches and bring new light to old questions. Third, some very technical subjects in need of vast direct experience could only be treated by a few scholars. In such cases an editor has no real choice, as is shown by comparing the tables of contents of the above-mentioned general books and the present one: often the same author deals with the same theme in several places.

This handbook is in two main parts: critical reviews of methods and main issues (part 1), and syntheses of history, civilization, the landscape of Etruria, and Etruscans outside Etruria (part 2).

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<sup>8</sup> As noted in D. Ridgway, "Greece, Etruria and Rome: relationships and receptions." *Ancient West & East* 9, 2010: 50.

<sup>9</sup> Since 1994 the American section has published the journal *Etruscan Studies*.

## 2.1 Part 1

Because the Etruscans were a cultural bridge between differing times and areas (protohistory and history, East and West, Greece and Rome), Etruscology deals with many aspects extending throughout the first millennium BCE, from protohistory to Roman times, from the classification of Iron Age artifacts to the history of art proper. Therefore it has never developed a methodology of its own but needs multiple approaches to this wide range of subjects. The first section of part 1 (chapters 2–8) is devoted entirely to methodology in the history of Etruscology, from the question of the origin of the Etruscans to images of the Etruscans in Greek and Latin literature, from the earliest phases of the discipline to modern interpretations of art and iconology, including recent research on DNA analysis. The study of the Etruscan language, known exclusively through ancient inscriptions, has always had a special role and therefore needs a special treatment of its methodology.

“Issues” offers a combination of major subjects typical of any important ancient civilization along with some areas where Etruscans were preeminent in the ancient world (section II, chapters 9–31). The issues discussed include three thematic divisions, devoted to politics and society (political organization and magistrates, economy and trade, war, society, wine culture, banqueting and food, sports, dance, alphabets and language), religion (religion, death and burial, haruspicy, prophecy and divination), and finally technology (ships and shipping, harbors, vehicles and roads, mines and metalworking, the mines on the island of Elba, coins and mints, weights and balances, textiles and dress, musical instruments, gold dental appliances). Such issues are not particularly new for Etruscologists, but it is new to have all of them together in one place. The present volume aims to be systematic, but some aspects are missing. Current knowledge of certain subjects, such as the Etruscan system of measures and demography, seem to be too limited to provide an exhaustive overview.

## 2.2 Part 2

The third section, dedicated to history, opens the second part of this book. Etruscan civilization corresponds to the first millennium BCE and has been divided schematically into five main periods (all dates earlier than the first century mentioned in this volume are assumed to be BCE unless otherwise marked):

1. Early Iron Age, 10th cent.–730
2. Orientalizing period, 730–580
3. Archaic and Classical periods, 580–450
4. Late Classical and Hellenistic periods, 450–250
5. Etruria and Rome, 250–89

The development of Etruscan history is covered accordingly in five chapters, which are introduced by a general historical framework dealing with a thousand years of Etruscan history and related events, and are followed by a portrait of the Etruscan legacy in Roman civilization (section III, chapters 32–38). Each chapter deals with the main event of a period, corresponding to the development from village to city for the Early Iron Age, the diffusion of Near Eastern cultures for the Orientalizing period, urban civilization for the Archaic and Classical periods, the diffusion of Hellenism in central Italy for the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods, and the relationship with Rome for the Republican age. There follows the treatment of Etruscan civilization under its five main periods, each including six subjects: art, handicrafts, society, ritual and cults, economy, and external relationships (section IV, chapters 39–68). The systematic structure, which aims to give an overview so that similarities can be compared and differences marked between the periods, was inspired by Renato Peroni's impressive book on Italy in the Bronze Age.<sup>10</sup> Following established criteria in Classical studies, the chapters on art deal with the three main fine arts: sculpture, architecture, and painting; while vase painting and pottery, bronze vases, jewelry, and small finds are grouped under handicrafts. The individual treatments of economy and society in these groups of chapters are more detailed than the general reviews in part II (chapters 10 and 12). In general, possible overlaps throughout the book should not be considered a drawback, but an enrichment that provides the reader with a finer orientation to this volume's more than 1,700 pages.

Sections V, Topography of Etruria, is devoted to environmental and topographical descriptions of the southern and northern districts of Etruria (section V, chapters 69–72). Section VI outlines the presence of the Etruscans outside Etruria in Italy (chapters 73–78) and then reviews Etruscan interaction and trade first in non-Etruscan Italy; then in south central and central Europe; and finally in the Mediterranean area, including Corsica (included here by convention, although it had a real Etruscan presence), Sicily, Sardinia, Greece and the Levant, North Africa, southern France, and the Iberian peninsula (chapters 79–90).

The maps deserve special mention due to their importance in the book: forty maps have been drawn, including both new subjects, such as the development of Etruscan cities over the five historical periods and the distribution of Etruscan inscriptions, and traditional themes, such as the natural landscape, the ports and related cities of Etruria, metallic ores and other resources in Etruria, the distribution of Etruscan finds in and outside Italy, and the distribution of some overseas items in Etruria.

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<sup>10</sup> R. Peroni, *L'Italia alle soglie della storia*, Rome, Bari 1996: Laterza.

### 3 Acknowledgments

My most sincere thanks are due all the authors; they supported a scientific enterprise with their written contributions. As editor I conceived the plan of the book and I am responsible for it and any mistakes.

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Michiel Klein-Swormink in winter 2010 suggested that I edit a Handbook of Etruscology for de Gruyter. My enthusiastic and naïve acceptance has been followed by seven years of hard work, first creating an outline of the book, then contacting the authors, and lastly performing the delicate job of editor. Dr. Serena Pirrotta of de Gruyter assisted with contacts with museums and other collections to obtain permission to reproduce the images. The copyeditor Aaron Ostrow was a fine work companion. Special thanks are due all them.

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In the present work have been used the abbreviations of the Oxford Classical Dictionary, 4th edition, Oxford 2012 for ancient authors (<http://classics.oxfordre.com/staticfiles/images/ORECLA/OCDABBREVIATIONS.pdf>), and those of Studi Etruschi for journals and books series ([http://www.bretschneideronline.it/studi\\_etruschi/pdf\\_studi\\_etruschi/studi\\_etruschi\\_73/STUDETR\\_LXXIII\\_Abbreviazioni.pdf](http://www.bretschneideronline.it/studi_etruschi/pdf_studi_etruschi/studi_etruschi_73/STUDETR_LXXIII_Abbreviazioni.pdf))