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A COMPANION TO THE ETRUSCANS

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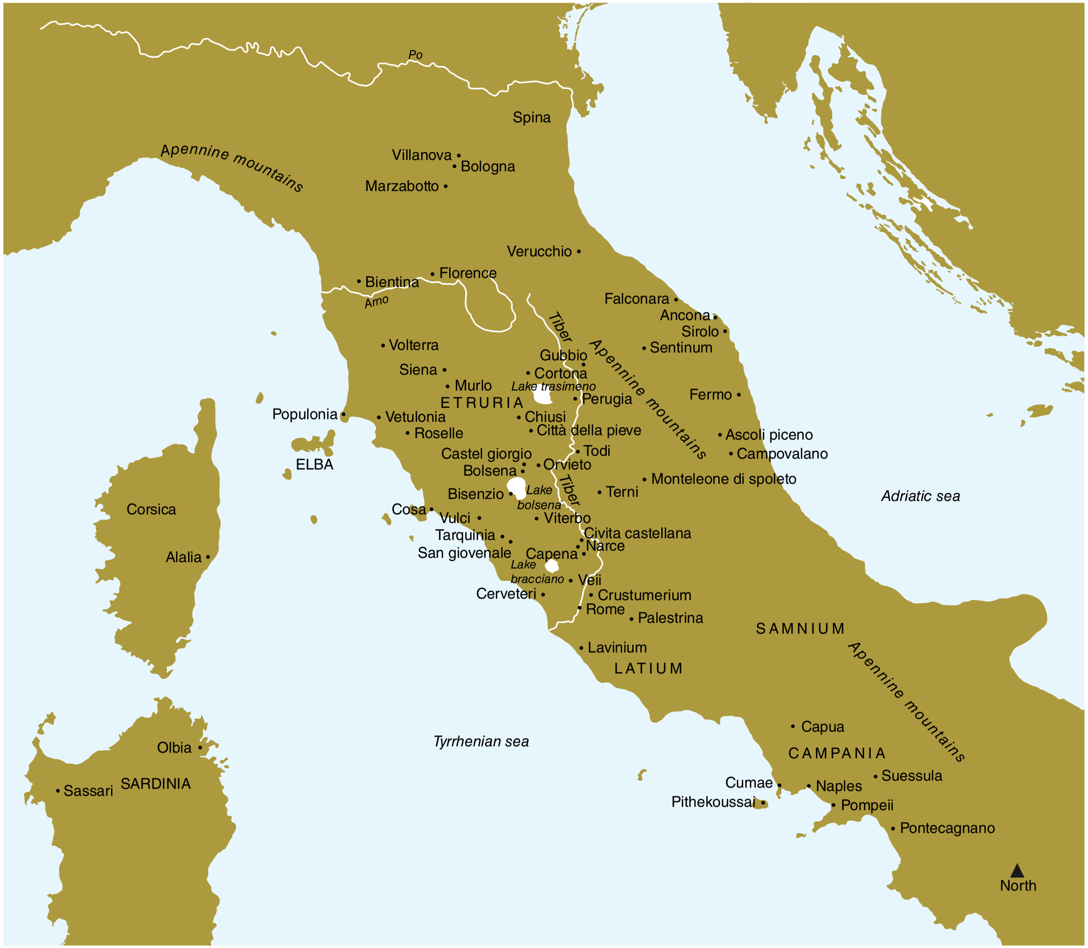
Sinclair Bell and Alexandra A. Carpino
Chicago, Illinois, and Flagstaff, Arizona
October 2015

Map of Etruria


Po
Spina
Apennine mountains
Villanova
Bologna
Marzabotto
Verucchio
Bientina
Florence
Arno
Falconara
Ancona
Sirolo
Tiber
Sentinum
Volterra
Gubbio
Apennine mountains
Siena
Cortona
Murlo
Lake trasimeno
Fermo
Perugia
ETRURIA
Populonia
Vetulonia
Chiusi
Roselle
Città della pieve
Ascoli piceno
Todi
Campovalano
Castel giorgio
ELBA
Orvieto
Bolsena
Monteleone di spoleto
Tiber
Adriatic sea
Bisenzio
Lake bolsena
Terni
Corsica
Cosa
Vulci
Viterbo
Tarquinia
Civita castellana
Narce
San giovenale
Capena
Alalia
Lake bracciano
Veii
Cerveteri
Crustumerium
Rome
Palestrina
SAMNIUM
Lavinium
Apennine mountains
LATIUM
Capua
Tyrrhenian sea
Olbia
CAMPANIA
Suessula
Sassari
SARDINIA
Cumae
Naples
Pithekoussai
Pompeii
Pontecagnano
North

Map 1 Map of Etruria. Drawing: De Puma 2013: Map 1. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Introduction

Alexandra A. Carpino and Sinclair Bell

> *The concept of an "Etruscan world" isolated, intrusive and virtually antithetic to an "Italic world" is rapidly becoming a myth.*
>
> Massimo Pallottino (Pallottino 1975: 237)

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, there has not only been a rising interest in Etruscan art and archaeology in the United States but also a desire to present these important pre-Roman peoples as they were in antiquity: a vibrant, independent people whose distinct civilization flourished in central Italy for most of the first millennium BCE and whose influences were felt throughout the Mediterranean, from the Black Sea to the Strait of Gibraltar. At the root of this interest is the conviction, eloquently stated by the late David Ridgway, that "Treated in its own right and on its own terms, the archaeological, architectural, artistic, historical, political and religious record of the largely autonomous Etruscan cities is indispensable to the proper understanding of the Mediterranean and Classical worlds: and of ancient Europe, too" (Ridgway 2010: 49–50).

One of the first signs of this shift in North America came in 2003 when the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology completed a decade-long gallery renovation project which emphasized both the artistic and thematic connections between the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans. Not only did its new Kyle M. Phillips Etruscan Gallery contain numerous artifacts never previously exhibited at the museum but – taken as a whole – they set a new standard for curation and display: their organization highlights both artistic and thematic connections with works on display in the neighboring spaces devoted to the Greeks and the Romans. Thus, this comprehensive exhibition allowed its visitors multiple opportunities to explore the Etruscans' rich artistic heritage, to draw connections with artifacts from other parts of the Mediterranean, and in this way to understand better its lasting legacy to Western culture. The accompanying catalogue, published two years later (Turfa 2005), also marked what Nancy T. de Grummond has called "a new stage in American research on the antiquities of Italy": its essays provided essential background on the cultural and artistic contexts of Etruscan art (topics include technology and commerce, the art of worship, daily life, and Etruria's final days), while the lavishly illustrated entries included comprehensive analyses and commentaries.

Not long thereafter, in 2007, over 550 works of art in the Etruscan collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York were reinstalled in a permanent gallery whose goal was to provide the institution's visitors with a wide-ranging overview of Italy's most important pre-Roman culture. In addition, 150 Etruscan artifacts were added to the museum's Study Collection gallery. Many of these works of art were also recently published in a comprehensive catalogue (De Puma 2013) that incorporates the most up-to-date research on the Etruscans and significantly enhances our knowledge about their culture.

In addition to these projects at two of the most important museums in the United States (see further, Chapter 31 for a complete list of collections with significant Etruscan art holdings), single exhibitions such as *From the Temple to the Tomb: Etruscan Treasures from Tuscany*, on display at the Meadows Museum at SMU (Dallas) in 2009 (Warden 2008), and *The Chimaera of Arezzo*, held at the J. Paul Getty Museum between July 2009 and February 2010 (Iozzo 2009, with the important review by Warden 2011), provided additional opportunities for the American public to see, first-hand, a broad range of Etruscan material culture from a European collection organized and displayed, once again, so as to emphasize its distinctive artistic characteristics, its original contexts, and its relationships to the wider Mediterranean world.

Of course, there have long been indicators of this movement outside of North America, especially in Italy, where landmark as well as more recent exhibitions (e.g., Torelli 2001; Cianferoni and Celuzza 2010; Beltramo Ceppi Zevi and Restellini 2011; Mandolesi and Sannibale 2012; Gaultier et al. 2013) and significant publications (e.g., by G. Camporeale and G. Colonna, among many others) have continually revitalized the field of Etruscology while also giving the Etruscans a wider, popular audience. Some important, recent changes elsewhere in Europe signal movement in a similarly positive direction. The creation of the first formal position for the teaching of Etruscan art – the Sybille Haynes Lectureship in Etruscan and Italic Archaeology and Art at the University of Oxford – fulfills a longstanding need in the discipline, one forcefully advocated by David Ridgway (2010) in an essay published shortly before the appointment's announcement. In addition, publications of important European collections continue to appear, such as that in Berlin (Kästner 2013), the Louvre (Bruschetti 2011) and Palermo (Villa 2012).

This *Companion to the Etruscans* capitalizes on this ongoing interest in the Etruscans in the English-speaking world by bringing together both well-established and emerging scholars whose chapters present fresh perspectives on Etruscan art and culture, ones that call attention, in particular, to recent discoveries, new theoretical approaches, and reassessments of long-standing misconceptions and/or beliefs. Traditional topics such as architecture, wall paintings, textiles, ceramics, and sculpture, along with those that have not been addressed elsewhere, appear as the most up-to-date research is analyzed and examined anew. Assessments that denigrate the Etruscans as mysterious, eccentric, and culturally inferior to the Greeks and the Romans have been set aside, and their appropriation of a wide variety of foreign customs, artistic styles, and literary themes is reconsidered from perspectives that emphasize agency and reception rather than a deficit of local creativity. Regional artistic and cultural diversity within Etruria itself – the product of its independent urban centers – is also discussed in depth, as are the ancient literary sources that mention the Etruscans. The latter are treated critically in three different chapters whose authors demonstrate that the ancient texts reflect more on the values and ideals of Greco-Roman society than provide accurate information about the Etruscans. Finally, the Etruscans' heritage and legacies are fully acknowledged, especially with respect to technical and artistic innovations that appear first in Etruria before becoming widespread in other parts of the ancient Mediterranean.

2. Contents

The volume is divided into five parts – I. History; II. Geography, Urbanization, and Space; III. Evidence in Context; IV. Art, Society, and Culture; and V. The Etruscan Legacy and Contemporary Issues. This format that allows readers to become familiar with the key themes, approaches, and issues that underlie the study of the Etruscans today. A comprehensive list of references and a Guide to Further Reading accompany each chapter, while an appendix that details the Etruscan art found in North American museums appears at the end of the book.

In Part I: History, Simon Stoddart ("Beginnings: Protovillanovan and Villanovan Etruria") provides an overview of the evidence that indicates that the origins of the material culture later described as Etruscan can be found throughout the phases of the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age. His chapter is followed by Skylar Neil's "Materializing the Etruscans: The Expression and Negotiation of Identity during the Orientalizing, Archaic, and Classical periods." Using a contextual approach and a theoretical framework that counters the anachronistic biases found in the ancient literary sources, Neil provides new insights into the Etruscans' history and culture over four centuries of significant transformation. The section concludes with Letizia Ceccarelli's discussion of the Romanization of Etruria from the perspective of both the colonizers and those who were colonized. After discussing Roman strategies with respect to road construction, the founding of colonies, and the creation of alliances with members of the ruling Etruscan elite, she focuses on how the latter's religious and funerary architecture manifests the process of Romanization.

In Part II: Geography, Urbanization, and Space, readers are provided with an overview of the key aspects of material culture that gave the Etruscans their distinctive identity and contributed to their ability to thrive both in central Italy and throughout much of the Mediterranean for nearly a millennium. In "Etruscan Italy: Physical Geography and Environment," Simon Stoddart demonstrates how the Etruscans' unique landscape allowed for the growth of regionally diverse urban and rural centers that specialized in maritime or fluvial transport, agriculture, and metallurgy, depending on their locations. Next, in "City and Countryside," he discusses the relationship between rural and nucleated landscapes and how these related to each other from the Orientalizing period onward. Giovannangelo Camporeale then provides a still-broader perspective on ecologies and networks in his chapter "The Etruscans and the Mediterranean." Noting that "the sea in general and the Mediterranean in particular did not impose a boundary on the Etruscans," he discusses how trade contributed to radical changes in artistic production, literacy, urban organization, and lifestyle. Corinna Riva delves more deeply into the question of Etruscan urbanization in her chapter, "Urbanization and Foundation Rites: The Material Culture of Rituals at the Heart and the Margins of Etruscan Early Cities." She questions the past reliance of scholars on the foundation acts and events recorded by later Roman textual sources, arguing that they are more appropriate for considerations about the foundation of Roman colonies than for the Etruscans. Instead, she argues for the primacy of archaeological data, which – when treated on their own terms – allow for a much richer and more complex understanding of the earliest phases of urbanization and their connections to longstanding political and ritual processes. In "Poggio Civitate: Community Form in Inland Etruria," Anthony Tuck discusses a site that flourished from the late stages of the Iron Age through the middle of the Archaic period. The subject of excavations for the past 60 years, Poggio Civitate stands as the aristocratic center of an inland Etruscan community whose innovative technologies, trade contacts, architectural designs, and decorative schemes continue to change our perceptions of early urbanization and elite ideologies in Etruria. Claudio Bizzarri then presents an overview of benchmark sites and current excavations in southern and inner Etruria. The work of a number of international teams have, over the past few decades, significantly furthered our understanding of the Etruscans' life, culture, and contributions at sites such as Tarquinia, Orvieto, and Cerveteri.

Domestic space, along with the water management technologies and engineering acumen that distinguished the Etruscans from all other cultures on the Italian peninsula during their heyday, serve as the themes analyzed by Claudio Bizzarri and David Soren in Chapter 10. The authors consider how the Etruscans syncretized or blended technology from other Mediterranean cultures and then adapted it to meet their own specific ritual and physical requirements. Chapter 11 addresses the topic of funerary architecture. In "Rock Tombs and the World of Etruscan *Necropoleis*: Recent Discoveries, Research, and Interpretations," Stephan Steingräber traces the origin, typology, and distribution of a tomb type without parallel in the rest of Italy, arguing that the arrangement and organization of the larger rock tomb *necropoleis* were "not accidental but an expression of an intended rational use of space and of new urbanistic tendencies." By situating their elaborate facades toward cities, these tombs not only established "a permanent visual link between the area of the living and the area of the dead," but also allowed their owners and their families "to stand out in public and permanently recall themselves to the minds of their descendants." Sacred space, along with the performance of religious rituals that reinforced the hierarchies of the Etruscan social landscape, are the topics of the chapter that concludes Part II, P. Gregory Warden's "Communicating with the Gods: Sacred Space in Etruria." By foregrounding ritual in his discussion of the designs of sacred space as well as of temples and altars, Warden demonstrates the intricate connections between Etruria's theocratic elite and the physical loci of their religiosity.

Part III centers on the theme of "Evidence in Context." It begins with a debate that has been going on since ancient times: the question of the Etruscans' origins. In his chapter, "Etruscan Skeletal Biology and Etruscan Origins," Marshall Becker demonstrates that modern DNA studies cannot be relied upon to provide a definitive answer to this question, given the genetic diversity of their population and the dearth of high-quality skeletal material available for analysis. He also summarizes data from a group of skeletons from Tarquinia which not only aid our knowledge of Etruscan biology but also provide a better understanding of the burial customs this urban center designated for the remains of men, women, and children, customs that offer insights into household dynamics and social organization in southern Etruria. Rex Wallace tackles the Etruscans' spoken and written language, one that cannot be correlated with any of their Italic neighbors, in Chapter 14, "Language, Alphabet, and Linguistic Affiliation." New excavations, along with the rigorous scientific study of Etruscan words, inscriptions, and linguistic structure, continue to reveal information that not only helps to solve longstanding grammatical issues but also creates new ones that fuel the direction of future research.

The next five chapters consider various art forms in context: bucchero, textiles, wall paintings, votives, and jewelry. In "Bucchero in Context," Philip Perkins incorporates the framework of the "life cycle" in order to place the Etruscans' most distinctive and original class of ceramic production into its historical and cultural milieu and suggest avenues for future research. Margarita Gleba discusses the relatively new field of textile archaeology in Etruria in her chapter; she not only considers the important data that new scientific methods have generated with respect to issues as varied as chronology and provenance, but also the domestic, commercial, and ritual importance of textile production and what this tells us about women's contributions to their families and communities. Specialization of a different sort is the subject of Chapter 17, "Etruscan Wall Painting: Insights, Innovation and Legacy." By highlighting the various advances in technique, style, and subject matter that originate in Etruria rather than Greece and which thereby became part of their legacy to Rome, Lisa

Pieraccini reconsiders both the theme of artistic creativity and the role Etruria played as a pioneer in this field. This chapter not only addresses the imbalance in the scholarship on ancient Italic wall painting but it also emphasizes the evidence that provides a better understanding of the Etrusco-Roman artistic relationship. Helen Nagy then treats a single category of object – the votive – that, in highly significant ways, bears witness to the well-known religiosity of the Etruscans. She highlights the numinous powers inherent in what are often humble objects and argues that it is "evident that for the Etruscans once an object was placed in a sacred context, it was considered to be divinely imbued and had to be offered the rituals proper to its disposition." Jewelry is the final art form analyzed in depth in this section. Alexis Castor considers its use by men, women, and children, concentrating on the personal and public identities conveyed by their materials, scale, and forms. Attention to these aspects reveals the various cultural layers embedded in accessories that not only had both material and symbolic value but which also marked different life stages.

The final three chapters in Part III treat the ancient literary sources that include references to the Etruscans and their culture. In "*Luxuria prolapse est*: Etruscan Wealth and Decadence," Hilary Becker dissects two *topoi* which many Greek and Roman authors described as particularly "Etruscan" but which, after careful consideration, reveal more about Greco-Roman culture and upper class fears about behaviors and traits deemed both undesirable and unacceptable. Becker argues that the very construction and promotion of *topoi* about the Etruscans' excessive wealth and decadence functioned as deliberate distortions designed to reinforce Greco-Roman – not Etruscan – standards and realities. This chapter is followed by Gretchen Meyers's "Tanaquil: The Conception and Construction of an Etruscan Matron." Here, the author examines the literary sources that discuss this well-known Etruscan queen, looking both at how she gained her Roman identity and how it relates both to her Etruscan one as well as aspects of real Etruscan women's lives (specifically with respect to the production of ceremonial textiles). Her nuanced reassessment of Tanaquil's textile production and its different meanings through time provide new evidence about the identity and activities of elite Etruscan women. The section concludes with Jean MacIntosh Turfa's, "The *Obesus Etruscus*: Can the Trope be True?" Turfa considers another well-known Roman literary convention – that of the overweight and self-indulgent Etruscan – in comparison to archaeological and artistic data. She argues that the health, behavior, and appearance of the majority of the members of their society have very little to do with a characterization invented long after the Etruscans' heyday.

Part IV: Art, Society, and Culture begins with Ann Gunter's analysis of the Etruscans' relationship to both Greek art and the Near East during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. She argues that internal social and political changes in Etruria – rather than external forces – provided the stimulus for the Etruscan elites' artistic and cultural interaction with the eastern Mediterranean. These factors, in turn, resulted in an influx of foreign styles, imagery, and cultural practices that were incorporated into indigenous traditions and generated new forms of visual and material expression. In Chapter 24, "Etruscan Artists," Jocelyn Penny Small then counters past – mainly Hellenic – views that have failed to acknowledge the creativity and technical skills of the anonymous individuals who produced works as varied as gold jewelry with intricate granulation or large scale terracotta sculptures. She argues that it is critical for scholars to acknowledge, once and for all, "that the aim of art need not be limited to the imitation of nature, as the Greeks and the Romans believed, but that [it] can also be abstract, to name just one characteristic." The Etruscans' reception of a Greek stylistic form is the theme of Francesco de Angelis's study of Etruscan bodies and Greek ponderation. He considers how the various regions of Etruria responded to a particular stylistic element – ponderation – and argues that its use was both "immediate and sensorial – [rather than] naive or unsophisticated," as well as intricately tied to the Etruscans' sense of self. When understood as a fluid corporeal "costume," one which different characters could display depending on the persona they were meant to convey, ponderation becomes a motif that allows scholars to gain a deeper and more complex understanding about the reception of Classical Greek art in Etruria.

Iconographic themes underlie Ingrid Krauskopf's discussion of myth in Etruria. The author focuses both on why the Etruscans first incorporated certain stories of Greek origin into their own practices and then on how these became an integral part of Etruscan culture. Part IV concludes with a reassessment of the different uses of violent imagery in Etruria in contexts as varied as the sanctuary, the tomb, and the home. In "The 'Taste' for Violence in Etruscan Art: Debunking the Myth," Alexandra Carpino argues that a small number of Greek stories were exploited deliberately not because the Etruscans had a taste for violence and its depiction, but because these particular subjects resonated both emotionally and psychologically with Etruscans of all ages while also effectively communicating specific beliefs, values, and anxieties about human behavior and passions. She also points out that these images are in the minority in terms of the overall corpus of subjects found on domestic artifacts, indicating, above all, that their selection was both thoughtful and deliberate and not symptomatic of an appetite for bloody or horrific imagery.

The volume concludes with Part V, "The Etruscan Legacy and Contemporary Issues." Ingrid Rowland discusses the beginning of Etruscan Studies in her analysis of the life and times of Giovanni Nanni, a Dominican friar in late fifteenth-century Italy whose books, authored under the pseudonym Annius of Viterbo, helped lay the groundwork for the discipline. Despite providing the Etruscans with a false history – one that traced their first king back to Noah – Annius remains a pioneering figure in the study of this important Italic culture, one whose story allows us to understand better the first Etruscan revival and its impact on the art and architecture of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italy.

Richard De Puma expounds further on actual Etruscan forgeries in his chapter, "Tyrrhenian Sirens: The Seductive Song of Etruscan Forgeries." He focuses both on the motivations for their manufacture and how certain well-known examples – e.g., the large terracotta sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York – have colored our perceptions of the Etruscans. In addition, he discusses the range of scientific methods that can be used to distinguish an authentic artifact from a fake. Part V concludes with Gordon Lobay's chapter, "Looting and the Antiquities Trade," an up-to-date survey of the many issues surrounding the traffic in antiquities in Italy both currently and in the past. Lobay discusses the various legal and international agreements that have been created to address the problem, and provides readers with a number of resources that discuss the implications of looting on the future of the field.

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