

The Etruscan World



The earliest known examples of Etruscan writing are inscriptions found in southern Etruria that date to around 700 BC.[14][21] The Etruscans developed a system of writing derived from the Euboean alphabet, which was used in the Magna Graecia (coastal areas located in Southern Italy).[22] The Etruscan language remains only partly understood, making modern understanding of their society and culture heavily dependent on much later and generally disapproving Roman and Greek sources. In the Etruscan political system, authority resided in its individual small cities, and probably in its prominent individual families. At the height of Etruscan power, elite Etruscan families grew very rich through trade with the Celtic world to the north and the Greeks to the south, and they filled their large family tombs with imported luxuries.[23][24] The Etruscan system of belief was an immanent polytheism; that is, all visible phenomena were considered to be a manifestation of divine power and that power was subdivided into deities that acted continually on the world of man and could be dissuaded or persuaded in favour of human affairs. How to understand the will of deities, and how to behave, had been revealed to the Etruscans by two initiators, Tages, a childlike figure born from tilled land and immediately gifted with prescience, and Vegoia, a female figure. Their teachings were kept in a

series of sacred books. Three layers of deities are evident in the extensive Etruscan art motifs. One appears to be divinities of an indigenous nature: Catha and Usil, the sun; *Tivr*, the moon; Selvans, a civil god; Turan, the goddess of love; Laran, the god of war; Leinth, the goddess of death; Maris; Thalna; Turms; and the ever-popular Fufluns, whose name is related in some way to the city of Populonia and the populus Romanus, possibly, the god of the people.[103][104]

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Get Textbooks on Google PlayRent and save from the world's largest eBookstore. Read, highlight, and take notes, across web, tablet, and phone. The Romans often butchered and sold into slavery the vanquished, established colonies, and repopulated areas with veterans. The end finally came when many Etruscan cities supported Marius in the civil war won by Sulla who promptly sacked them all over again in 83 and 82 BCE. The Etruscans became Romanised, their culture and language giving way to Latin and Latin ways, their literature destroyed, and their history obliterated. It would take 2,500 years and the almost miraculous discovery of intact tombs stuffed with exquisite artefacts and decorated with vibrant wall paintings before the world realised what had been lost. The religion of the Etruscans was polytheistic with gods for all those important places, objects, ideas, and events, which were thought to affect or control everyday life. At the head of the pantheon was Tin, although like most such figures he was probably not thought to concern himself much with mundane human affairs. For that, there were all sorts of other gods such as Thanur, the goddess of birth; Aita, god of the Underworld; and Usil, the Sun god. The national Etruscan god seems to have been Veltha (aka Veltune or Voltumna) who was closely associated with vegetation. Lesser figures included winged females known as Vanth, who seem to be messengers of death, and heroes, amongst them Hercules, who was, along with many other Greek gods and heroes, adopted, renamed and tweaked by the Etruscans to sit alongside their own deities. Such ceremonies as animal sacrifices, the pouring of blood into the ground, and music and dancing usually occurred outside temples built in honour of particular gods. Ordinary folk would leave offerings at these temple sites to thank the gods for a service done or in the hope of receiving one in the near future. Votive offerings were, besides foodstuffs, typically in the form of inscribed pottery vessels and figurines or bronze statuettes of humans and animals. Amulets were worn, especially by children, for the same reason and to keep away evil spirits and bad luck. The presence of both precious and everyday objects in Etruscan tombs is an indicator of a belief in the afterlife which they considered a continuation of the person's

life in this world, much like the ancient Egyptians. If the wall paintings in many tombs are an indicator, then the next life, at least for those occupants, started with a family reunion and rolled on to an endless round of pleasant banquets, games, dancing, and music. Without doubt the greatest artistic legacy of the Etruscans is their magnificent tomb wall paintings which give a unique and technicolour glimpse into their lost world. Only 2% of tombs were painted, which indicates only the elite could afford such luxury. The paintings are applied either directly to the stone wall or onto a thin base layer of plaster wash with the artists first drawing outlines using chalk or charcoal. The use of shading is minimal, but the colour shades many so that the pictures stand out vibrantly. The earliest date to the mid-6th century BCE, but topics remain consistent over the centuries with a particular love of dancing, music, hunting, sports, processions, and dining scenes. Sometimes there are also historical scenes such as the battles depicted in the Francois Tomb at Vulci. The paintings give us not only an idea of Etruscan daily life, eating habits, and clothing but also reveal social attitudes, notably to slaves, foreigners, and women. For example, the presence of married women at banquets and drinking parties (indicated by accompanying inscriptions) shows that they enjoyed a more equal social status with their husbands than seen in other ancient cultures of the period. World History Encyclopedia is a non-profit organization. For only \$5 per month you can become a member and support our mission to engage people with cultural heritage and to improve history education worldwide. **We are a non-profit organization.** Our mission is to engage people with cultural heritage and to improve history education worldwide. Please support World History Encyclopedia. Thank you! But there was a dark side to the Etruscan afterlife. This was dramatically revealed in 1985 when an Etruscan tomb was discovered that shocked archeologists. Besides the usual enchanting images normally found in Etruscan tombs, there were now paintings of a hooked-nose Blue Demon, a creature from the Etruscan underworld. This image was intended not to reassure, but to terrify. The Etruscan system of belief was an immanent polytheism; that is, all visible phenomena were considered to be a manifestation of divine power, and that power was subdivided into deities that acted continually on the world of man and could be dissuaded or persuaded in favor of human affairs. Three layers of deities are evident in the extensive Etruscan art motifs. One appears to be divinities of an indigenous nature: Catha and Usil, the sun; Tivr, the moon; Selvans, a civil god; Turan, the goddess of love; Laran, the god of war; Leinth, the goddess of death; Maris; Thalna; Turms; and the ever-popular Fufluns, whose name is related in an unknown way to the city of Populonia and the *populus Romanus*, the Roman people. The Etruscan system of belief was an immanent polytheism; that is, all visible phenomena were considered to be a manifestation of divine power and that power was subdivided into deities that acted continually on the world of man, and could be dissuaded or persuaded in favor of human affairs. The Greek polytheistic approach was similar to the Etruscan religious and cultural base. As the Romans emerged from the legacy created by both of these groups, it shared in a belief system of many gods and deities. While there is still much we do not know about the Etruscan language, the corpus of inscriptions continues to grow through new discoveries, affording us new insights into the literary world of the Etruscans that was lost under the rising tide of Roman influence and power. The political organization of the Etruscans farther north is less clear. The southern cities at least for some purposes had a federal structure, but we do not know if this was also the case for the northern cities, and there is still work to be done on the hierarchy of settlement and links between the southern group and the north. One of the most successful urban excavations has been in the unusually regular city of Marzabotto, with a new account of the artisanal areas and the central temple complex (Govi 2017c; Sassatelli and Govi 2005). Work in Bologna (Etruscan Felsina) is naturally sporadic but informative (see below). A team from the University of Zurich is conducting promising work at the complex waterside site of Spina, which is often compared with Venice because of its ingenious architecture and was a notable contact point with the Greek world (Berti et al. 1993); there are interesting possibilities for palaeobotanic work in particular (Reusser 2017). The other aspect of the wider Etruscan influence on the peninsula relates to the settlements of Campania. Here, too, we lack a convincing narrative that makes sense of the archaeological material. Connections across central Italy or by sea seem traceable from the

early Iron Age and continue strongly in the Orientalizing and Archaic period, but it is less clear, and much disputed, what kind of political domination we should imagine, and the problem is somewhat analogous to the challenge of understanding Etruscan presence in Rome. What does seem clear is that Greek victories over a large Italic army in 524 BC and an Etruscan fleet in 474 BC off Cumae eroded significantly the Etruscan presence in southern Italy (e.g., Camporeale 2004b; Cerchiali 2010; Cerchiali et al. 2018; Gilotta 2009; Osanna and Verger 2018). Theories of autochthony or migration have long been something of a battleground for Etruscan studies (Bellelli 2012). The general trend is now to emphasize cultural change as the product of internal developments rather than external influence. There are no good grounds for seeing a major population shift either between what were termed the proto-Villanovan and Villanovan periods, or during the Iron Age, and it is very difficult to see why we continue to use labels like proto-Villanovan and Villanovan when we are referring to the population of the area that we call Etruria (Negroni Catacchio 2000). The apparent logic is that ethnogenesis was a product of urbanism. Blake (2014), using network analysis, has suggested that the group that is later regarded as ethnic, in some sense, is visible in the Bronze Age, and while the constructed nature of ethnic identity is an important fact to us, the question remains as to what extent and when ethnicity became a characterizing feature of the Italian world. In other words, the connectivity that unites a particular region in terms of geography, geology, settlement, and people may be much older than the creation of a generic name.

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