

ARCHAEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM:
THE TROJAN LEGEND IN ETRURIA

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ABSTRACT

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National borders, continuously drawn and redrawn through history to represent ever-changing political configurations, would be mere inconsistent lines on geographical maps if they were not reinforced by national cohesive beliefs and collective national interests. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new nations, the intense debate taking place in Western Europe about federation on one hand and the retention of individual national identity on the other, the request within the European Community to expand membership to additional NATO countries while preserving regional languages and cultural traditions, are all indicators of a renewed generalized interest in the concept of nationalism and the process of national identity formation. Within the process of national identity formation some disciplines have played a crucial role in the establishment and promotion of national unification and ethnic cohesion: archaeology is, without any doubt, one of these disciplines.

In this study, the role of archaeology in relation to national identity formation will be analyzed in one of the most debated archaeological subjects in the western world, the case of Etruscan origins. This study will demonstrate how through history the Etruscan legend has permeated the political reality at many levels and how this legend of provenience has been used to promote the formation of national identity and unified mythical ethnic origins. The

ultimate purpose of this study is to demonstrate that what is accepted today as solid and objective cultural reality of the past might have been fluid expressions opportunistically shaped and used through time to promote both political and personal agendas.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, Margarita Diaz-Andreu, a scholar in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Complutense in Madrid, observes that nationalism is deeply embedded in the concept of archaeology, in its development and institutionalization (Diaz-Andreu 1997). A renewed interest in the dynamics of nation-state formation and archaeological activities has permeated not only academic reality during the last ten years; it has become a crucial topic of discussion and controversy among political scientists and anthropologists (Kohl 1997). This renewed interest in the interrelationship between nationalism and archaeology was the central topic at the third annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeology held in Ravenna, Italy in 1996, where scholars from twelve nations (Denmark, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania and Slovenia) presented and debated the complex connections between nationalist ideas and archaeological activities in the development of their nation-state formations (Diaz-Andreu 1997).

According to the scholars representing these nations, the renewed interest in nation-state formation is a direct consequence of two significant political changes which occurred and still are occurring within Europe in the last few decades:

- The collapse of the Soviet Union with the resulting formation of new nation-states
- The expanding membership to several new countries in the Federation of the European Union (Diaz-Andreu 1997:1).

The numerous political, historical, sociological and economic consequences produced by these two major world events are difficult to predict; what we can observe is the active role that archaeology is playing in reshaping this new world configuration and the engaging debate that this phenomenon is producing among social scientists. Careful observation of these significant

world changes indicates that the new product of European political and social configuration consists of a contradictory phenomenon; while economic interests promote a global market and the tendency for a homologous cultural reality, a renewed interest in local language, tradition and cultural identity is promoting the general need and desire to preserve and protect the distinguishing characters of national identity, mainly in the form of archaeological wealth, local languages and folkloric traditions (Lewellen 2002:123).

In this intricate and ever-evolving cultural and political arena, the purpose of my study is to discuss the role that archaeology plays in the complex process of nation-state formation. Archaeology, like history, preserves an immense wealth of both material remains and written records that can be used and abused to support claims of national identity rooted in past generations. Above all, archaeology has the power to pose questions and propose research that is linked to specific cultural and sociopolitical realities, at times driven by state or individual agendas (Kane 2003:31).

My study will focus on one specific archaeological example, the case of Etruscan civilization in the development of Italian cultural and national identity. I believe that a discussion of the Etruscan case is important for several reasons: Etruscan culture belongs to and defines not just Italy, but the entire Mediterranean region, as the Etruscan culture influenced Roman civilization which later colonized and expanded its power across the entire area of the Mediterranean. In fact, the debate over Etruscan origins permeates and involves many nations at different times. Historical and archaeological evidence shows the "Etruscan case" in Italy to be a reference point in which the phenomenon of archaeological appropriation in state formation and national identity can be applied to other regions of the world and periods in history; this was the main idea discussed at the European Association of Archaeology in Ravenna, Italy (Diaz-Andreu 1997).

Another crucial point to take into consideration is the historical involvement of archaeology in the process of Italian state formation, which is well documented. Italy is a nation where

archaeology has been very instrumental in the process of national unification to the extent that during the years of Italian political unification (1860-1870), a centralized agency was created for the conservation of cultural heritage (Campani). This desire and need for a unified historical and archaeological tradition was seen as a crucial political element in overcoming the cultural fragmentation present in Italy at a time when the nation was a collection of small states and foreign colonies.

In this study I will present the intriguing topic of the relationship between archaeology and nation-state formation, specifically the political debate of Etruscan origins and the legendary birth of the Italian population from the divine Trojan hero Aeneas. My study will not favor one archaeological thesis over the other; neither will my study propose a definitive answer to the question of Etruscan origins. It will serve instead as a research tool to illustrate the nature of archaeology and the significant impact this discipline can have on the political complexity of our world.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

My presentation will reference archaeological evidence, historical sources, and recent anthropological research on nationalism and identity formation. I will include in this study a brief historical account of the Italian political journey to final unification to illustrate how regionalism has been and still is an essential element of Italian cultural identity. This historical summary will point out that regionalism has influenced archaeological research in Italy and that archaeology has been employed, at times, to promote specific political agendas. I will include in this study a discussion of the relation between Italian archaeology and Italian nationalism in reference to both the Etruscan case and the use of archaeology at the time of fascist expansion in Africa. I will then demonstrate how the question of Etruscan origins is political in nature and how Italian archaeologists posing this question have evoked and continue to evoke nationalism in their archaeological investigation. In order to combine these elements in a coherent and logical academic discourse, my presentation will proceed as follows:

- (1) I will first address the renewed interest in the question of nationalism and national identity formation taking place in academic discourse today, primarily after the formation of the European Union. My main source of information in this regard will be provided by material discussed at the third annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeology held in Ravenna, Italy in 1996.
- (2) My case study of Etruscan origins will be presented as evidence to illustrate how archaeologists, historians and others have used the Etruscan “cultural dilemma” to support and promote national ideas of ethnic unity. My case study will include literary sources from the classical era: Homer, Herodotus, Livy, Dionysius of Halikarnassos, and Pausanias as well as the opinion of today’s renowned contemporary Etruscologists such as Pallottino, Palmucci, Munzi and others.

- (3) Visual material from the Etruscan funerary chambers of Tarquinia will be presented in this study, including several frescoes representing scenes of Etruscan life with symbolic elements that offer insight on Etruscan origins and spiritual beliefs. Perhaps these frescoes functioned in antiquity as modern photographs do today, illustrating what otherwise would be knowledge forever lost.
- (4) My study will include analyses by European and American scholars, as I believe in order for this study to be comprehensive; it must be inclusive and must comprise opinions, points of view, and information from these crucial geographic areas which are actively engaged in the study of literary, historical and archaeological contributions to national identity formation.
- (5) Current scientific methodology, such as DNA testing in archaeology to trace genetic provenience of specific human groups, will be mentioned in this study as an attempt to resolve the dilemma of Etruscan origins. My study will also show that this ostensibly objective scientific technique can be used by different groups to support different theories about Etruscan origins. Ultimately my study will suggest that objective scientific research such as genetic testing is open to individual interpretation which might not provide an unbiased answer to the question of Etruscan origins.

CHAPTER 3

NATIONALISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN THEORY

During the last twenty years the complex interaction between nationalism and archaeology has been increasingly debated in the theoretical discourse of many prominent archaeologists. Scholars in this discipline have felt the need to reflect on the birth, development and historical role that archaeology has played within social science. Some very important questions have been posed to analyze the role of archaeology in the context of social movements and historical periods. This analysis of the role of archaeology in the past has helped archaeologists to understand not only the significance archaeology has played in specific social realities throughout history, but also in the definition of the theoretical direction archaeology should take in the future.

Walter Taylor in his comprehensive analysis *A Study of Archeology* (Taylor 1948) expressed the need for archaeologists to reflect on the nature of the discipline they practiced. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the importance of archaeology, it is necessary to reconstruct the history of archaeology through a detailed analysis of the role that this discipline had played since its origins. Taylor indicates that archaeology from the beginning has been embedded with nationalistic themes and in fact the very existence of this discipline was the product of nationalist pride. Taylor writes that modern archaeology developed with the return of humanism in Italy at the end of the Middle Ages when a renewed interest in the antiquities of Italy and Greece motivated a formal investigation of these past civilizations. Taylor argues that the initial impetus for the birth of archaeology in the Italian Renaissance was a newly awakened pride in the glory of Roman antiquity. According to Taylor the very birth of archaeological study was motivated by nationalist interests (Taylor 1948:13).

The notion that archaeology has been interconnected with nationalistic pride since the very birth of this discipline brings archaeologists to the conclusion that an open debate on the

relationship between archaeology and nationalism is of crucial importance not only to clarify the theoretical definition of archaeology as a discipline, but also to understand the practical repercussions that archaeological excavations have played and continue to play on the political arena of nationalist sentiments around the world. After recognizing that archaeology has played and continues to play a crucial role in the dynamics of state formation, another important issue that should be taken into consideration is the freedom and restrictions archaeologists encounter in the practice of this discipline.

Continuing Taylor's analysis, Bruce G. Trigger, a respected historian of archaeology, discusses the complex relationship between archaeology and nationalism in "Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist". Trigger provides a very informative summary concerning the historical role that archaeology has played in the political dimension of nations. He argues that most archaeological traditions are nationalistic in orientation:

Yet my investigation leads me to believe that there is a close relationship between the nature of archaeological research and the social milieu in which it is practiced. More specifically, I would suggest that the nature of archaeological research is shaped to a significant degree by the roles that particular nation states play: economically, politically, and culturally, as independent parts of the modern world-system. (Trigger 1996:616)

Trigger provides numerous examples to demonstrate that a very close historical connection has existed and continues to exist between nationalism and archaeology. In "Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist," Trigger explains that in the post-Napoleonic era, European archaeology was promoted to develop, establish and reinforce national identity and patriotic sentiments. He adds that very often governments themselves offered patronage to archaeological excavations which became tools of political propaganda. Trigger includes many examples in his writing to illustrate the historical interaction of archaeology and nationalism. Among these cases he describes some grandiose archaeological excavations which were promoted by national leaders to celebrate nationalistic traditions. In his article Trigger mentions that the interrelation of archaeology and nationalism is not restricted to European nations, but rather is a universal phenomenon seen all over the world. Among the examples that Trigger

discusses is the excavation of the fortresses at Mont Auxois and Mont Rea ordered by Napoleon III to demonstrate the existence of Celtic culture in France at the time of the Roman conquest (Trigger 1996:618). This article also references the case of the majestic excavations conducted at Masada in modern Israel to celebrate the last Zealot resistance to Romans in A.D. 73 (Trigger 1996:618). On the American continent, Trigger finds similar interactions between archaeology and nationalism in Mexico, where since the Revolution of 1910 there has been constant attention in archaeological excavations to pre-Hispanic civilizations existing before the European colonization (Trigger 1996:619). Perhaps the most significant example that Trigger includes in his writing that clearly illustrates the close connection between archaeology and political propaganda with tragic repercussions is the case of Germany, when Gustaf Kossinna intended to demonstrate through archaeological data that Germany had been the home of Indo-European people and that only in Germany did Indo-Europeans preserve their racial purity (Trigger 1996:620). Trigger completes his essay by identifying several types of interactions between archaeology and nationalism. He distinguishes colonialist archaeology and imperialist archaeology as components actively participating in well defined plans of political propaganda (Trigger 1996:628).

Archaeologists Margarita Diaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion participate with a strong voice in the intellectual debate over the politicization of archaeology. They believe that there is not such a thing as a non-political archaeology and that in fact archaeology has at times perverted the past in order to promote specific nationalistic agenda. In *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, Diaz-Andreu and Champion argue that once accepted that archaeology and nationalism have interacted at a deep level, it is important to understand how the politicization of archaeology has operated through time and to ask if archaeology is the sole science in which this process of politicization has happened, or if, on the other hand, other sciences have suffered the same fate. Diaz-Andreu and Champion believe that only through a detailed analysis of the role of archaeology through time can this question be answered to verify to what

extent the politicization of archaeology is a new phenomenon or a component of the existence of archaeology (Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996:2).

Other archaeologists have felt the need to not only discuss the general terms of the interrelations between archaeology and nationalism, but to look with an introspective eye into the history of archaeology in their own countries to verify if and when archaeology has served as an instrument to create political propaganda aimed at the promotion of nationalism. Massimiliano Munzi in "Italian Archaeology in Libya from Colonial Romanita to Decolonization of the Past" provides a vital analysis of the close connection between Italian nationalism and its archaeological practices. Munzi demonstrates that in order to promote a political idea of Italian expansion, fascism employed archaeological excavations in Libya to serve the political objective of Italian colonization in Africa. Although Italian archaeology during fascism is not the primary focus of this study, Munzi's discussion of nationalism and archaeology in Italy is relevant as it relates to the issue of how nationalism has penetrated the discussion of one of the most vexing dilemmas in archaeology, namely the origin of the Etruscans. We will see how the very question of origin posed by archaeologists has influenced the investigation by provoking a political discussion which involves both Italian and non-Italian archaeologists debating the issue from different perspectives.

3.1 Archaeology and Nationalism: An Overview

As stated earlier, impressive political events such as the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and the creation of a growing European Federation have dramatically reshaped the geographical and political configuration of the world. The dissolution of the Soviet Union has resulted in the manifestation of continuous ethnic and national conflicts, mainly involving the geographical regions of the Balkans and Caucasus. These ethnic, territorial and political reconfigurations often invoke archaeological evidence in order to support and promote political claims and, at times, to pursue personal political agendas (Kane 2003:3).

Before analyzing the specific case of nationalism and archaeology in Italy, it is important to address the general interaction between archaeology and nationalism taking place daily on a

global scale. The most relevant factor is that archaeology and nationalism do not interact merely at a theoretical level in the form of debates among scholars in academic settings; nationalism and archaeology interact daily in the material world, where archaeological sites often become battlefields for political demonstrations and political attacks (Kohl 1998).

There are many instances in which archaeological sites have been used for political demonstrations, the most recent being those in the old city of Jerusalem, where the opening of a new entrance to an existing tunnel caused a Palestinian response (Kohl 1998:224). In northern India, the destruction of the Babri Masjid at the site of Ayodhya in 1992 was the violent result of political frictions (Kohl 1988:224)

Italian archaeology, although rooted in deep political traditions, does not currently present manifestations of violent political confrontations on archaeological sites; intellectual debates are conducted in the form of dialogues, essays, discussions, museum displays, local celebrations and cultural festivals. Italian archaeological sites are not converted into political battlefields for political demonstrations; however, many prominent Italian archaeological sites have been defaced with political messages in the form of graffiti and carvings on monuments, statues and even archaeological ruins. Kent L. Norman's study on Italian graffiti illustrates this phenomenon in Rome. He writes:

When people visit famous sites, there is an overwhelming urge to leave a record that they have been there. It is almost as if people need to log in to the site. Rome, in Italy is a city that has hosted a tremendous amount of graffiti in the last ten years. Rome has many new and ancient surfaces, public, private, religious and commercial (Norman 2004).

Archaeological sites are considered to be important locations for political messages due to their popularity, cultural significance, and central location within the city. Inscriptions on archaeological sites attract the attention of local news media, and images of the inscriptions are distributed by the international media to a global audience. These inscriptions, clearly visible on Italian monuments, often contain political messages meant to reach the attention of millions of people, both local residents and tourists visiting from the world over. In this case archaeological sites take on a new political dimension to their existence. Italian archaeological wealth has been

used today and in the past to promote political propaganda. A clear example of the use of a cultural site for artistic expression is the graffiti at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (Norman 2004), which is a religious destination for millions of people.

Within an archaeological discourse on Italian nationalism and Etruscan origins, social scientists are concerned with some of the very same issues that were debated by Greek and Roman writers from the classical period (Bloch 1958:53). The terms of this debate have not changed much over time, despite more than two thousand years of research and scientific advancement. In order to understand the unchanging nature of this scholarly debate, we should briefly summarize the historical stages of Italian unification.

3.2 The Regional Nature of Italian Culture

In order to have a clear understanding of the regional nature of Italian culture, politics and archaeological data, it is important to analyze the unique historical complexity of this nation. Italy has immense artistic beauty, cultural wealth and archaeological treasures as a result of a privileged geographical location and numerous cultural influences layered through time on the beautiful land. The Italian peninsula, which is located in the Mediterranean basin between the East, the West, and close to Africa, enjoys a strategic trading position with the Near East and Africa. Its temperate climate has favored the development of impressive cultures throughout history.

3.2.1 A Brief Account of Italian History

Important discoveries at Ceprano and Isernia have documented sporadic human presence on the Italian Peninsula dating to around 700 kya (Klein 1999:321,323). Other excavations revealing the presence of human remains have taken place in Saccopastore near Rome and in the Circeo, producing the very important disclosure of Neanderthal remains dating approximately to the Last Interglacial age (Klein 1999:376). Human remains of the Italian Neanderthals present the same characteristics of other Neanderthal cultures found in Europe, revealing a human culture based on hunting and gathering, fishing, the use of stone tools, and dwellings in deep caves (Klein 1999:371)

Excavations throughout Italy, at Monte Pellegrino in Sicily, in the caves of Romanelli and in the caves of Balzi Rossi demonstrate that in 10,000 BC on the Italian peninsula different cultures probably coming from the East coexisted (Camera and Fabietti 1969:9). Later, in 1500 BC, Greek cultural influences were evident in Southern Italy (Camera and Fabietti 1969:1-10). The most important visible geographical cultural division between northern and southern Italy appears around 2000 BC (Pallotino 1955:35). At this time immigrant populations coming from the east introduced the art of metalworking to southern Italy and Sicily, while northern Italy developed cultural connections with populations from northern cultures across the Alps. Between 1800 and 1000 BC the first Italian cultural unity is commonly identified as the Apennine culture; this important cultural group represents large agricultural and pastoral settlements spread throughout central and southern Italy (Dudley 1970:11). At this same time trade between southern Italian cultures and the Mycenaean Greeks was believed to have begun. After 1500 BC, the famous Terramare culture flourished in the northern Italian Po Valley region (Camera and Fabietti 1969:1).

established. The northern geographical area including the present region of Emilia Romagna to the northern Italian border have characteristics linking them to the northern alpine culture. In contrast, the southern geographic region, from modern Latium to the island of Sicily, were influenced by Greek and Near Eastern cultures. Ancient Etruria, the region where Etruscan culture flourished, geographically included parts of present-day Tuscany, Umbria and Latium.



Figure 3.2 Ancient Etruria

Due to its unique location, the Etruscan culture has been associated by some archaeologists with northern Alpine cultures (Richardson 1964:31) and by other archaeologists with Near Eastern influences found in southern Italy, a notion that was first introduced by the Roman historian Livy, who describes the connection between the culture of central Italy and the Trojan migration: “Aeneas was an exile from his home because of a similar disaster; but the fates guided him to initiate greater achievements. First he came to Macedonia, then he sailed to Sicily as he sought a place to settle, and from Sicily he held course for the territory of Laurentum” (Livy, *History of Rome*, Book 1, ch. 1).

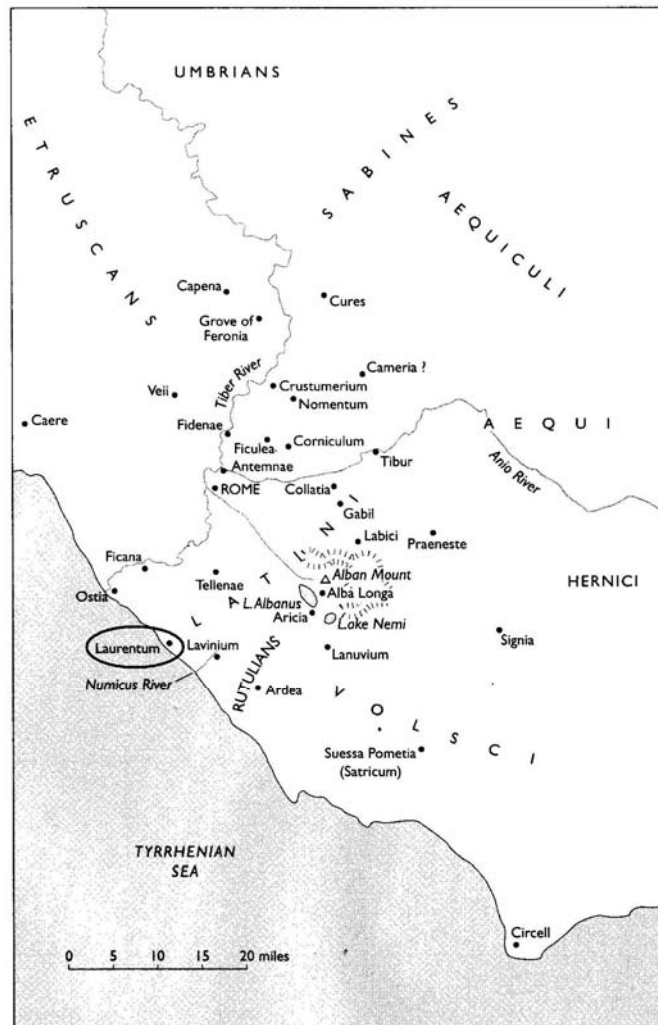


Figure 3.3 Laurentum

This regional division, based on historical legend and archaeological evidence, has remained a constant factor in the political history of Italy and in the debate over Etruscan origins (Pallottino 1955:35).

Before the Roman domination of the Italian peninsula, several cultures coexisted and interacted in the Italian landscape. By the 7th century BC the Etruscans became the dominant culture of what is today Tuscany, while at the same time the Greeks established colonial settlements along the southwestern shoreline and in Sicily.

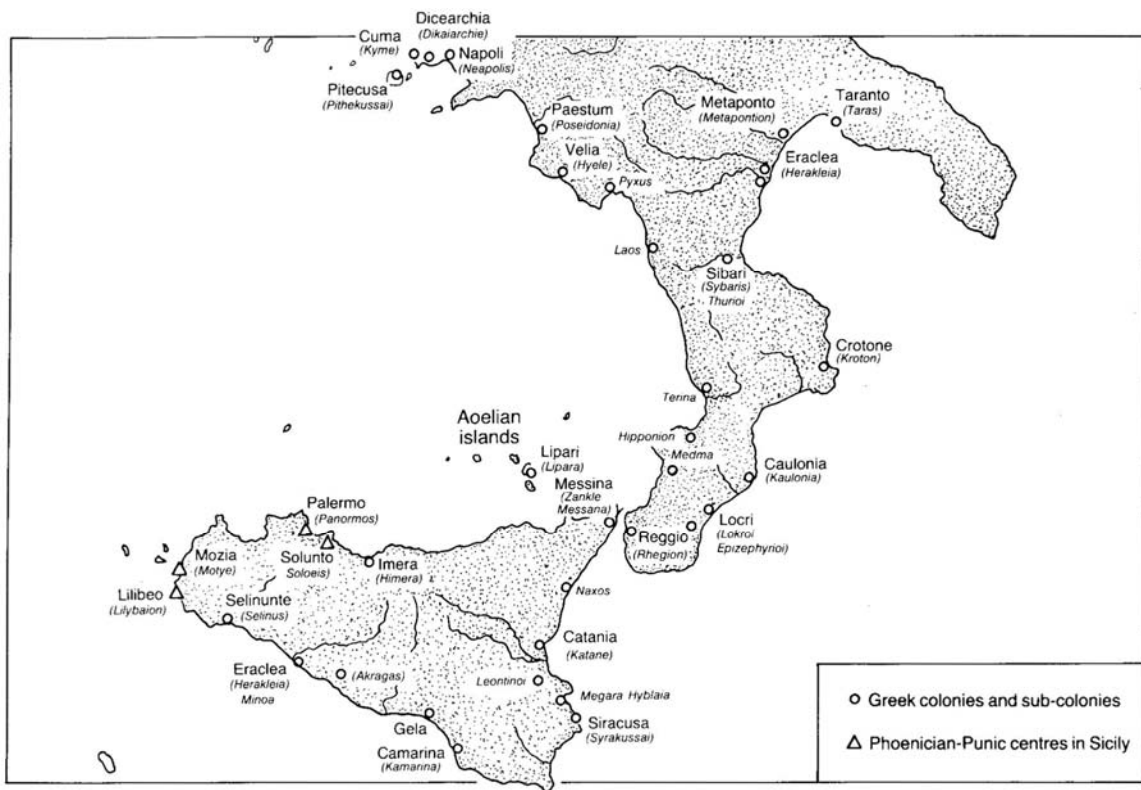


Figure 3.4 Greek and Phoenician colonization

At this same time another prominent Italian group, the Latins, lived on the western coastal Tyrrhenian plain called Latium (Dudley 1970:9). By the 6th century BC several Latin city-states became increasingly independent and competitive to the extent that they formed a political league at the time when Etruscan Rome was pursuing an aggressive policy of domination (Dudley 1970:29-30). At the end of the 6th century BC Etruscan dominance in Latium ended with

the expulsion of the Etruscan kings by the Latins. At this same time many other Italian populations were present on the Italian peninsula, among them the Sabellian, Sabines, Umbrians, Aequi, Marsi, Paeligni, Vestini, Marruccini, Fentani, Campani, Lucani and Brutti (Pallotino 1991:154).

According to Roman historian Livy, the city of Rome was founded by Romulus:

Since Romulus and Remus were twins and distinction could not be made by respect for age, they decided to ask the protecting gods of the area to declare by augury who should rule over it after its foundation. Romulus took the Palantine and Remus the Aventine, as the respective areas from which to take the auspices. Remus is said to have received the first augury, six vultures. This augury had already been announced when twice the number appeared to Romulus. Each man was hailed as king by his own followers. Remus' men based their claim to the throne on priority; Romulus' followers on the number of birds. Arguments broke out, and the angry conflict resulted in bloodshed. Amid the throng, Remus was struck dead. The more common story is that Remus leaped over the new walls, jeering at his brother. He was killed by the enraged Romulus, who added the threat, "So perish whoever else shall leap over my walls." Thus Romulus became the sole ruler and the city, so founded, was given its founder's name (Livy, *History of Rome*, Book 1, ch. 6-7)

Livy's account of the founding of Rome has also been embraced by modern historians. In *The Romans*, Donald Dudley writes: "Ancient legend and modern archaeology converge in the story of the Palentine Hill in Rome. On this hill, on the 21st April in a year later agreed upon to have been 753 B.C., tradition asserts that Romulus with due ritual founded the city of Rome" (Dudley 1970:8). Etruscan kings ruled the city from 616 BC till the expulsion of the last Etruscan king around 450 BC (Camera and Fabietti 1969:39). With the decline of Etruscan power in Rome, the Romans began a process of expansion which reached its final stage in the first century BC, with the extension of Roman citizenship throughout Italy, the diffusion of Roman institutions and the use of Latin as the dominant language of the Italian peninsula (Dudley 1970:220-226).

With the advent of Christianity, Rome gained a growing importance as the center of the new religion. When Roman power was transferred to Constantinople during the Middle Ages, Italian ties with this new Rome of the East were severed by a series of invasions from the west and north, which resulted in the emergence of the Papacy on the Italian peninsula and the establishment of Italian cities as independent powers (Pirenne 1993:131).

In 568 the Lombards, a Germanic group, arrived in Italy and extended their power in northern Italy, Tuscany and Umbria, while much of southern and eastern Italy remained under Byzantine domination. The Lombards found heavy political resistance from the Papal States, so they consolidated their power in central and northern Italy. After 568, a crisis in Byzantium provoked a revolt in Rome, Naples and Venice, allowing the Lombards to extend their reign (Pirenne 1993:44). The success of the Lombards was temporary, as another Germanic tribe, the Franks, invaded Italy and expelled the Lombards in 774. In 800, Charlemagne was crowned emperor of Rome and all Lombard territory passed into the hands of this Frankish emperor (Pirenne 1993:143).

From ca. 800 to 900, Italy was afflicted by continuous conflicts between Franks and Byzantines, while a new group of invaders, the Saracens, entered Italy from North Africa. The Saracens conquered Sicily in 827 and established outposts throughout southern Italy; in 846 they launched an attack on Rome. The 9th century saw the collapse of the Carolingian empire and a brief return of Eastern influence (Pazzaglia 1993:53).

In 962 the German king Otto was crowned Holy Roman emperor. Shortly after 1000 the Ottoman dynasty fell, leaving the north in a vacuum of power where powerful merchant towns began to emerge. Meanwhile the Saracens' power weakened in southern Italy. During the 11th century an elaborate pattern of communal government began to evolve; many cities, such as Milan, Genoa, Venice, Florence and Pisa became powerful and independent city-states (Pazzaglia 1993:416). These *Comuni* promoted the end of feudalism in northern Italy, replacing it with the power of the city (as opposed to the larger region or country). These cities were often troubled by conflicts among their citizens. The most famous of these conflicts was in Florence between the Guelphs, supporters of the popes, and the Ghibellines, supporters of the emperors (Cecchi and Sapegno 1988:9-10). These cities, although afflicted by internal divisions, contributed significantly to Italian cultural development.

While the northern regions of Italy had organized in independent urban centers, southern Italy experienced a political consolidation after the conquest by the Normans from 999 till 1139.

Saracens and Byzantines were expelled from Italian land and the southern regions of Italy consolidated with Sicily in a unified kingdom. With the weakening papal and imperial authority great intellectual changes took place in Italy (Cecchi and Sapegno 1988:638). An intellectual revival gave rise to the humanist attitudes and ideas that formed the basis of the Renaissance. At this same time many of the communal governments of the city-states fell under the rule of dictators called *signori* who became hereditary rulers.

In the 18th century some areas of Italy achieved independence. The kingdom of Sardinia annexed portions of Lombardy and a few years later the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies became an independent monarchy under the power of the Spanish Bourbon dynasty (Pazzaglia 1993:412). Italy fell under French domination after the invasion of General Napoleon Bonaparte and, after two decades of Napoleon's rule, profound changes took place in Italy; many Italians began to see the possibility of a united country free from foreign control.

During this period the Austrians controlled Lombardy and Venice; the repressive and reactionary policies imposed on Italy by the Austrian regime and the Congress of Vienna from 1814 to 1815 aggravated popular discontent. The expansion of Austrian control over Italy stimulated intense anti-foreign sentiment (Hobson 1996:58). These elements gave rise to the Italian unification movement called *Risorgimento*. Revolutionaries and patriots began to work actively for unity and independence. Under the progressive and liberal leadership of Camillo Benzo, Sardinia became unified with Italy, and Venice and Rome were included in 1866 and in 1870 respectively (Giannantoni 1968:220).

As can be seen in this brief account of Italian history, Italian culture is the product of multiple interactions between local cultural expressions of the Italian peninsula and those imposed by foreign domination. For this reason regionalism in Italy is not just an aspect of Italian culture, but the very essence of Italian cultural identity. Within the complex Italian national cultural reality some regional influences have achieved the status of national cultural expressions after having been incorporated into the political process of Italian nation-building and nationalism. Several

scholars have focused on the aspect of Italian cultural unity and regionalism, producing some interesting observations.

3.2.2 *Having Made Italy, We Now Have To Make the Italians*

Giovanna Campani, in *Minorities Formation in Italy*, presents a very detailed study of the historical and cultural evolution of Italian unification, identifying several contrasting forces that interacted to produce a final political national unity. Contrary to what many may believe, Italy, a nation celebrated for her ancient history and civilization became a unified nation-state in 1860, after having existed for centuries in the form of small regional states and having endured the domination of several foreign powers, such as France, Spain and Austria (Campani 2003).

The complex historical tradition of foreign domination of Italian land has caused linguistic and cultural fragmentation. Different languages were spoken throughout Italy. Many were Romance languages which had developed in every region as a result of political fragmentation in Italy. Alessandro Guidi, in his essay "Nationalism without a Nation: The Italian Case" from *Nationalism and Archaeology In Europe*, reconstructs and describes the interesting interrelationship of Italian political development and the cultural interaction between politics and archaeology in the construction of Italian nationalism. The author describes how archaeology has been the crucial science in the creation of a unified Italian national identity (Guidi 1997:111).

Guidi argues that foreign colonies and several small states had characterized Italian political reality until 1860. After this crucial date and for the next decade, a centralized agency for the conservation of cultural heritage was created in Italy to promote a unified cultural and historical tradition which would reinforce the idea of political unification. This centralized agency, the General Direction of Fine Arts and Antiquities, was formed to preserve and maintain cultural and artistic sites. Once Italy was formed as a unified political state, the next step was to form a unified Italian population. Guidi states that Italian archaeologists at that time played a crucial role in the fabrication of a cohesive Italian cultural heritage (Guidi 1997:109).

As described earlier, Italian cultural identity at the end of the nineteenth century was a reflection of regional traditions and local artistic expressions. Guidi also explains that Italian archaeologists were the product of Italian regional diversity. Italian prehistoric archaeology was mainly promoted through the work of pioneer archaeologists from northern Italian regions; they primarily represented the interests of the nineteenth-century Italian industrial bourgeoisie (Guidi 1997:110). Classical archaeology, concentrating on Etruscan and Roman cultures, was the area of interest of archaeologists and scholars from the southern regions of Italy. This distinguishing characteristic of Italian archaeology would define the development of the discipline in Italy until the present day, when regionalism remains a dominant trend.

3.3 The Etruscan Case In Italy

In order to understand the relationship between Italian archaeology and Italian nationalism it is imperative to discuss the crucial role that Etruscology has played within the tradition of Italian archaeology. The debate over Etruscan origins has raged for over 2000 years and a very polarized discussion has recurred without significant changes through centuries and millennia of history. When classical historians such Herodotus and Dionysius first debated Etruscan origins, archaeology as social science and the current political border of the Italian nation did not yet exist; however, the question of origins set the tone for what would later become a political debate.

3.3.1 Etruscology and Italian Nationalism

Massimo Pallottino in *The Etruscans* argues that the very first question posed about Etruscan civilization, the question of Etruscan provenance, is an irrelevant question because Etruscan civilization is a unique Italian product, a cultural phenomenon not found in any land other than the Italian peninsula (Pallottino 1955:68). The reality is that the question concerning Etruscan origins is political in nature because it implies the issues of nationalism, ethnicity and language. By asking "Where did the Etruscans come from?" we are really asking "Which nation and which population can claim a historical connection to this very advanced civilization?"

From the very birth of written history, classical writers argued this same question. One of the most interesting aspects of Etruscan culture is the nature of the scholarly debate that this civilization has produced among archaeologists, historians and social scientists through time, not only in Italy, but in the international academic arena of the Western world. The unique nature of this academic debate consists in the fact that after centuries of Etruscan research, scientific innovations and academic advancements, the terms of the debate in regard to Etruscan origins remain polarized in two diametrically opposed theories still argued today on the same terms that they were debated thousands of years ago by Herodotus and Dionysius of Halikarnassos. In order to understand the terms of this polarized debate we should briefly review its content.

The first historian to address the question of Etruscan origins was Herodotus, by tradition the first Greek historian who around the middle of the 5th century B.C. wrote the following moving account concerning the origins of the Etruscans:

In the reign of Atys, son of Manes, a great famine is said to have occurred in the whole of Lydia [in Asia Minor]. For some time, the Lydians persisted in carrying on their usual life; then as the famine did not abate, they sought remedies and some thought of one thing and some of another. It is said that it was then that the game of dice, the game of knuckles, games of ball and other games were invented but not the game of draughts, the invention of which the Lydians do not claim. And this is how they made their inventions serve them in combating hunger. On any two days they played throughout one whole day, so as to distract their attention from the search for food. The next day they stopped playing and ate. They lived in this manner for eighteen years.

But as the evil, instead of subsiding, continued to grow in violence, the king divided the Lydian people in two groups; and he drew lots for one of them to stay, the other to leave the country. He put himself at the head of the group which was to stay, and at the head of the group which was leaving, he put his son Tyrrhenos. Those Lydians who were designated by lot to leave the country went down to Smyrna, built ships, loaded these ships with all the valuable objects they possessed, and set sail to seek a territory and means of livelihood until, after skirting the shores of many lands, they reached the lands of the Umbrians. There they founded towns, in which they live until today, but they changed their name of Lydians for another, derived from that of the king who had led them. Taking his name as theirs, they called themselves Tyrrhenians (Herodotus, *Histories*, Book I, ch. 94)

Thus, according to Herodotus, the Etruscan civilization derives from the plateau of Asia Minor. Several other Greek and Roman historians such as Virgil, Ovid and Horace share this point of view, referring to the Etruscans as Lydians in their poems (Richardson 1976:68-69).

Seneca writes: "*Tuscos Asia sibi vindicate*," (Asia claims to have fathered the Tuscans). He used the Etruscans as an example of an entire population that migrated from its original land in Asia. This theory of Etruscan origin, generally supported by the majority of Greek and Latin historians, was rejected by the Greek theoretician Dionysius of Halikarnassos, who, during the Augustan period, devoted six chapters (xxv-xxx) of the first book of his *Early History of Rome* to the question of Etruscan origins. In these chapters Dionysius wrote:

I do not think that the Tyrrhenians were emigrants from Lydia. In fact they do not have the same language as the Lydians, and they cannot be said to preserve any other trait which may be considered to derive from their supposed homeland. They do not worship the same gods as the Lydians, they do not have the same laws and, in regard to this, they differ even more from the Lydians than from the Pelasgians. It thus seems to me that those who say that the Etruscans are not people who came from abroad, but are an indigenous race, are right, to me this seems to follow from the fact that they are a very ancient people which does not resemble any other either in its language or in its custom. (Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, Book I, ch. 30)

These two contrasting views of the problem of Etruscan provenance, both theorized in classical times, have shaped the subsequent development of this discussion, creating in essence two main schools of thought among archaeologists and scholars. The theory supporting the indigenous nature of the Etruscans has been embraced and promoted mainly by Italian Etruscologists, such as Piranesi (1765), Pallottino (1955), Palmucci (2007), and Torelli (1986) while non-Italian archaeologists have favored the Herodotean theory of an Asiatic origin or the Alpine Raetian origin, as in the case of Nicolas Freret (1850), Barthold Niebuhr (1873), and Karl Muller (Muller and Deeke 1877). In modern times this debate has incorporated not only classical texts and archaeological data, but also linguistic analysis and the latest scientific testing, such as DNA analysis on both human and animal remains. These sophisticated results have been used to support both theories and have therefore not validated one theory over the other.

This fervent and lasting conflict among scholars over the question of Etruscan provenance generates natural questions in the reader: Why so much hostility and polemic vigor over the question of Etruscan origins? Why such a sharp division among Italian and non-Italian

archaeologists? It has been argued that the question of provenance is a political question. This necessitates a discussion of the implications these questions raise.

3.3.2 *A Question of Cultural Dominance*

Owing to Italy's unique geographical location and configuration, excellent climate and numerous cultural and artistic expressions, the country has enjoyed a very privileged cultural position in Europe and the world. As the direct descendant of the Roman Empire, the Italian nation has achieved and enjoyed a unique status of political power. The Roman Empire and cultural domination of the Italian Renaissance, which were influenced by Etruscan historical tradition, still represents a model of cultural expression for other nations (De Grummond 1986:23).

A careful analysis of Italian cultural dominance through history reveals interesting aspects that are debated among ancient and modern scholars. Although the political importance of the Roman Empire was admired for its military conquests and geographic organization, Roman culture has always suffered "a complex of cultural inferiority" when compared to the cultural sophistication of Greek civilization. It has been argued among classical writers such as Horace that the greatness of the Roman Empire would not have existed without the immense contribution of Greece. Horace writes "Greece in its capture then captured its rough-mannered conqueror, thereby bringing the arts into countrified Latium" (Horace, *Epistles*, Book II, 156). It is commonly said that while the Roman Empire conquered the Greeks, the Romans were in return conquered by Greek culture.

The idea of Roman civilization as the cultural product of Greek influence has been reconsidered by Massimo Pallottino in *A History of Earliest Italy* (1991). Pallottino offers a counterargument to the question of Greek influence on Roman civilization by evaluating the history of pre-Roman Italic cultural expressions present on the Italian peninsula such as Osco-Umbrian, Sabellic, Etruscan, Ligurian, Venetic and Samnite (Pallottino 1991:5). He argues that historians have underestimated the cultural value and degree of sophistication that Italic cultures had achieved on the Italian peninsula before and during the Roman civilization. More

specifically Pallottino blames the hegemonic role of German and German-language scholarship and its culmination in the neohumanism of Helmut Berve which was intolerant of cultural expression that was not Greek (Pallottino 1991:10). Pallottino believes that a careful study of the Italic cultures in Italy will not only provide a historical definition of Italian cultural essence, but will also inform a better understanding of the significant achievements of the Roman Empire. Pallottino promotes a rewriting of the history of earliest Italy that emphasizes the existence and immense contribution of autochthonous Italic civilizations on Italian land. His analysis also answers many puzzling questions concerning Etruscan origins, demonstrating that Etruscan civilization is the sole result of interactions of Italic cultures. Pallottino writes: "Modern scholarship, even as it rejected the notions of antiquity, remained fixated on the idea that the origins of the Italic peoples were to be found in the effects of immigration from outside" (Pallottino 1991:26). Pallottino investigates the historical fallacy of non-autochthonous Etruscan origins by arguing against the traditional approach held by ancient and modern scholars on the issue of Etruscan provenance. Pallottino writes that ancient and modern thinkers have tried to explain the question of origins with historically accepted stereotypical images of a maritime immigration into Italy from the East, taking place in an early heroic age by Arcadian, Pelasgian, Achaean, Trojan, Lydian, Cretan, and Iapygian peoples. These eastern civilizations were associated with a mythical hero who would establish a new civilization on the Italian peninsula. Among these mythical figures are Heracles, Minos, Ulysses, Diomedes, Aeneas, Tyrrhenus and others. According to Pallottino, these heroic tales have the following common elements: they occur during the time of the Trojan War, have a fixed narrative in which a heroic leader travels west to a foreign land where he wages war on the indigenous inhabitants, marries the daughter of the foreign king and establishes a new kingdom on the conquered land (Pallottino 1991:25). Pallottino believes these mythological tales have been used to promote the political and cultural dominance of Eastern civilizations on Italic culture.

Pallottino's investigation of Italic cultures on the Italian peninsula is the product of a long historical tradition rooted at the birth of Italian nationalism. In order to understand how Italian

archaeologists have reached this level of introspection in Italian cultural studies it is important to analyze the political and psychological factors that have interacted to form the idea of Italian nationalism.

During the Neoclassical period in the eighteenth century a significant Italian cultural triumph was celebrated on Italian soil with the unexpected discovery of an artistic and advanced cultural expression in the regions of Tuscany and Latium, now known as the Etruscan culture, which predates the Romans and flourished on the Italian peninsula. The existence of an Etruscan civilization on Italian soil had in reality already been known since Roman times, but at this time the material rediscovery of Etruscan artistic wealth on Italian soil not only reopened the question of Etruscan origins, it gave confidence to Italian scholars to promote an entirely Italian cultural and artistic expression predating the Romans, one that developed solely on Italian land.

Nancy Thomson de Grummond in her essay "Rediscovery," argues that the influence of Etruscan culture on Italian tradition permeates the historical fabric of this nation and also the very essence of Italian painting for which Italy is considered a leading artistic force in the Renaissance. De Grummond believes that at the end of the medieval period and at the beginning of the Renaissance the influence of Etruscan painting can be detected in the most famous masterpieces produced by Italian artists. She addresses the similarities between the dancing figurines found on the frescoes of Etruscan funerary chambers, as in the case of those found in the Tomb of the Lioness in Tarquinia, and those found in the fresco of Justice in the Arena Chapel in Padua, one of Giotto's most famous masterpieces (de Grummond 1986:23). According to de Grummond, the Etruscan symbolic figure Charum becomes the inspiration for Giotto's depiction of Satan and Judas. De Grummond believes other famous Italian painters before Giotto had also taken artistic inspiration from Etruscan paintings. Nicola Pisano, in his creation of the reclining Virgin in the Baptistery of Pisa, was inspired by reclining Etruscan women found on ash urns and sarcophagi. De Grummond lists several Italian artists who were, in her opinion, influenced by Etruscan art, among who are several icons in the tradition of Italian painting: Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Donatello, Alberti, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Benvenuto Cellini,

Giorgio Vasari, Andrea Sansovino and others (de Grummond 1986:24). Raymond Bloch shares the same opinion when he states: "Etruscan frescoes, no longer extant, must have served as models for Michelangelo when he drew the head of Aita covered with a wolf's skin. Aita is no other than the Hades of the Etruscan world of the dead" (Bloch 1958:20). In light of the immense influence of Etruscan culture on the development of Italian cultural identity, the question of Etruscan origins becomes a central issue in the debate between archaeologists who favor an autochthonous provenance versus those who promote an Oriental migration.

The material discovery of Etruscan civilization and its distinguishing characteristics gave birth to Etruscology, a branch of archaeology devoted completely to the study, preservation and promotion of Etruscan civilization in the world. The birth and development of Etruscology is the product of continuous interaction among scholars of many nations. It is very important to remember that although the material remains of Etruscan culture are primarily on Italian soil, the study of Etruscan civilization is not solely a pursuit of Italian archaeologists, but of experts the world over. In this regard Etruscology should not be considered solely a domestic expression of Italian archaeology.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIRTH OF ETRUSCOLOGY: NATIONALIST IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned earlier, Etruscology, a discipline concerned with Etruscan culture and traditions, can be dated to the very birth of history itself, when Herodotus provided the first written document about this civilization. In Roman times, scholars also devoted their attention to the Etruscan civilization, which had almost achieved the unification of the Italian peninsula. Tarquinio Priscus, himself an Etruscan, in the 1st century B.C. translated the Tuscan sacred books into Latin (Bloch 1958:19). From this grand task only a few passages survive today in the writings of Seneca, Pliny the Elder and a few others. The Emperor Claudius, an antiquarian himself and married to the Etruscan Urganilla, devoted his attention to the Etruscan language, but unfortunately nothing is left today of his study of Etruscan grammar (Bloch 1958:19).

In the Middle Ages the famous Etruscan bronze masterpiece Capitoline Wolf was already known, and little formal study of Etruscan culture was conducted during this time. During the Renaissance, the attention of scholars was directed mainly to the art and architecture of Roman Imperial civilization. An interest in Etruscan culture resumed in the 16th century with the discovery of three major Etruscan bronzes: the Arezzo Chimaera, the Arezzo Minerva and the Arringatore (Banti 1973:34). These bronzes are still today the glory of the Archaeological Museum in Florence. In the 17th century two spectacular frescoed tombs were discovered in Tarquinia: the Tomb of the Cardinal and the Tartaglia Tomb. In 1690 Sir Thomas Dempster, a Scottish scholar, produced a monumental work entitled *De Etruria Libri Septem*, which marks the starting point of archaeological and historical research in Tuscany (Bloch 1958:27).

The first significant excavation on Etruscan soil was conducted on the site of Volterra in 1728 and it produced a significant number of Etruscan artifacts that are the treasure of the famous Volterra Archaeological Museum founded in 1750.



Figure 4.1 Volterra

In 1738 the antiquarian Francesco Ficoroni made a very important discovery, a cylindrical bronze cista with engraved decorations on its lid and side (Banti 1973:34). The motif of these decorations is the narration of the myth of the Argonauts. The coffin dates at about 330 B.C. and follows the style of Hellenistic classicism. During the 18th century, Father Gian Nicola Forlivesi began the exploration of some frescoed tombs in Tarquinia (Stiebing 1993:155), but it was not until the 19th century that the glorious wealth of these funerary chambers was fully revealed.

Of significant interest in the advancement of Etruscology were publications of Etruscan art aimed to promote the presence of an indigenous Etruscan culture on Italian land. In 1740 the Florentine Anton Francesco Gori published a monumental study with drawings not only of Etruscan artifacts but also Greek and Roman objects at that time considered to be Etruscan (Stiebing 1993:153). The 18th century was a period of enthusiasm for Etruscan art and civilization. Founded in 1726, the Cortona Etruscan Academy was a local society developed to investigate and promote Etruscan civilization as a unique expression on Tuscan soil (Pallottino 1975:24) The birth of this cultural organization is indicative of a desire of the citizens of Cortona to claim the Etruscan culture as native to their land. It included a museum and a library where scholarly discussion on Etruscan civilization regularly took place.

It is important to note that the Etruscan Academy was interested not only in the rediscovery of Etruscan art, but also in revitalizing both the political institution of Etruria and its social organization. In order to do so, this social group would elect a president called *lucumon* and assign Etruscan names to its 140 members, who were mainly citizens of the town of Cortona. The members held regular meetings twice a month during which they mimicked Etruscan lifestyle and discussed topics related to Etruscan art and history. The academy also published a series of *Dissertazioni* from 1738 to 1795 (Pallottino 1975:24).

A crucial role in the establishment of Etruscology is attributed to Abbe Luigi Lanzi and his assistant Antonio Zannoni for their linguistic study which suggested the Etruscan language was an ancient Italic dialect, rather than a product of Asiatic lands (Bloch 1958:28). Lanzi also played a crucial role in the establishment of the Etruscan collection at the Uffizi Museum in Florence, which evolved into the Florence Archaeological Museum in 1870. Another scholar very active in this period was Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who also favored an autochthonous origin of Etruscan civilization against the theory of an Asian origin which was promoted by his opponent, the French scholar Pierre Jean Mariette (Stiebing 1993:154).

It is clear that since the birth of Etruscology in classical times until the flourishing of this discipline in the 18th century the main debate about Etruscan origins has remained polarized on the two mutually exclusive theories: an autochthonous origin versus an Asian provenience. These two theories kept scholars divided through the 18th century and have kept them divided until the present day. Let us now analyze some relevant nationalist implications from the birth of Etruscology.

4.1 Etruscology and Nationalism: An Engaging Debate Among Scholars

Raymond Bloch, in *The Etruscans*, argues that the vigorous interest developed during the 18th century in Etruscan culture coincides with a specific national psychology in Italy (Bloch 1958:31). Bloch observes that during the 18th century, Italy was still divided into small states under foreign domination, with the northern regions of Italy under Austrian power. Although the

Italian Risorgimento, which resulted in Italian unification, would still be decades in the future, aspirations for a possible national unification began to develop on Italian soil (Pallottino 1991:8-9).

In this social and political atmosphere the question of Etruscan origins became a question of unprecedented historical importance to the extent that some Italian Etruscologists of the time proposed very provocative theories about the nature of Etruscan civilization. Among them is a daring theory proposed by Abbe Mario Guarnacci, in which the Etruscans “were not only the cultural vanguard of all other Italic peoples, but also, at certain periods, ahead of the Greeks” (Guarnacci 1767).

To reinforce the theory of an autochthonous origin of Etruscan civilization, another Italian Etruscologist of this time, Giovanni Battista Passeri, produced a monumental catalog entitled *Picturae Etruscorum in vasculis primum in unum collectae* in which he presented in detail a vast collection of Italic and Greek vases at that time believed to be Etruscan and therefore elevating appreciation of Etruscan art (Passeri 1767). The debate over Etruscan origins at this time became quite vigorous between a famous Italian engraver, Giovanni Battista Piranesi and his French rival Pierre Jean Mariette. Piranesi had dedicated his entire career to the study of Latin and Roman art; he believed that the artistic works of Italian civilization had been unjustly characterized as being rudimentary and underdeveloped until the influence of Greek teaching (Piranesi 1993:314). Piranesi argued that Etruscan and Roman architecture had achieved absolute splendor and sophistication independent of outside influences. To support his theory, Piranesi analyzed the artistic and architectural products crafted in Rome during the 6th century BC under the rule of Tarquinius Superbus. During this time Rome had already produced spectacular architectural achievements such as the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, the sophisticated sewer system dating from the Etruscan-Roman dynasty and used through centuries (Bonfante 1986:232).

Piranesi's analysis and reconstruction of Etruscan architectural achievements brought him to the conclusion that the splendor achieved by Roman architecture was entirely the product of Etruscan artistic influence, which was an indigenous artistic expression on Italian soil (Barker and Rasmussen 1998:2). Piranesi's theory of Etruscan origins promoted a very nationalistic message about the birth of Etruscan civilization on the Italian peninsula. He not only dismissed the role of Greek influence on Etruscan art, he also advocated the superiority of Etruscan architecture over most other classical architecture. Piranesi's theory of the origins of Etruscan civilization was opposed by a French scholar, Pierre Jean Mariette, who criticized Piranesi's superficial analysis of Etruscan civilization (Piranesi and Mariette 1765). Mariette argued that the Etruscans had achieved a sophisticated level of artistic expression as a result of Greek influence (Piranesi and Mariette 1765). Mariette's contribution to the *Gazette Litteraire de l'Europe* in 1764 demonstrates once again how the question of Etruscan origins remained a polarized debate through time placing Italian and non-Italian scholars on opposite sides.

In order to understand the emotional intensity of the dispute between Piranesi and Mariette, it is worth noting Mariette's words directed toward Piranesi:

Signor Piranesi maintains that when the first Romans wished to erect massive buildings, the solidity of which astonishes us, they were obliged to enlist the assistance of Etruscan architects who were their neighbors. One might as well say "the assistance of the Greeks," for the Etruscans, who were Greek by origin, were ignorant of the arts and practiced only those of them which had been taught to their fathers in the land of their origin. (Piranesi and Mariette 1765)

With these words Mariette opposes not only the idea of sophisticated Etruscan architecture and art, he also challenges the core theory of the Etruscan autochthonous origin in the Italian peninsula. Mariette's claim of Greek origins for the Etruscan civilization has never been validated by Etruscan scholars nor has become a debated issue in the question of Etruscan origins.

By reading these inflammatory comments it is impossible not to notice that two millennia after Herodotus and Dionysius and after significant advances in both Etruscology and archaeology, the polemic terms of the debate over Etruscan origins had remained basically

unchanged and that it was still of importance among the most prominent archaeologists and scholars. Mariette naturally provoked a response from Piranesi, in which the scholar pointedly criticized the theory that the Etruscans were Greeks (Piranesi and Mariette 1765). To support his idea, Piranesi discussed the friezes decorating the walls of several tombs at Tarquinia and Chiusi, claiming the absolute originality of these artistic expressions. Piranesi also points out that the numerous statues dispersed throughout central Italy were the product of Etruscan rather than Greek artists (Piranesi 1993:314).

Another important scholar of the time, perhaps the most famous of all, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, did not take a direct role in the quarrel over Etruscan origins. In an indirect way however, he supported the idea promoted by non-Italian archaeologists of a non-autochthonous origin of the Etruscans, when he stated, contrary to popular belief of the time, that many vases found in Etruscan tombs were not the product of Etruscans, but were produced by Greek artisans (Cook 1960:291).

4.2 The Current Status of the Debate

While Etruscology advanced due to a significant number of excavations and improved techniques, the main debate over Etruscan origins from the 19th century until our day remains a polarized argument dividing Italian and non-Italian archaeologists. In 1853 discoveries of Villanovan remains added a new component to the question of Etruscan origins (Barker and Rasmussen 1998: 60). Villanovan culture flourished near Bologna in the early Iron Age (900 BC to 700 BC); one of its most striking features is cremation burial. In light of these new discoveries, some archaeologists thought the Etruscans were related to the Alpine Raetians and that, like other Indo-European invaders, they had penetrated the Italian peninsula beginning ca. 2000 B.C. This new hypothesis of a Nordic origin was promoted mainly by Nicolas Freret (Freret 1850) , Barthold Niebuhr (Niebuhr 1873) and Karl Muller (Muller and Deeke 1877), all non-Italian scholars, who based their conclusion on the close connection between the name of the Alpine Raetians, a Nordic tribe that crossed the Alps and infiltrated Italy, and the name

Rasenna, which, according to Livy (*History of Rome*, Book 5, ch. 33), was used by the Etruscans to describe themselves. Once again the hypothesis of a non-indigenous origin of Etruscan civilization became a matter of disagreement between Italian and non-Italian archaeologists.

Mario Torelli, a prominent Italian Etruscan scholar, displays a clearly nationalist approach to the debate of Etruscan origins. In his essay, "History: Land and People", Torelli rejects the theory of eastern origins. He argues that the idea of an eastern mythical provenance of Etruscan people promoted by Greek historians has been refuted by archaeological excavations on Etruscan sites, which indicate a progressive transformation of Etruscan art from Iron Age elements to an Oriental influence. Torelli states:

Some have attempted to find confirmation in archaeology; considering the possibility that the Etruscans' arrival in Italy coincided with the so-called Orientalizing phase of Etruscan art. This idea is, however, contradicted by the study of the monuments unearthed by archaeology, for these reflect a gradual development from the art of the Iron Age to that of the Orientalizing period (Torelli 1986:48).

Torelli also opposes the theory of an Alpine origin for the Etruscans as he claims that similarities between the Raetians and the Etruscans resulted from the Etruscan expansion into the Po Valley rather than a southern migration of the Raetians into Northern Italy (Torelli 1986:48). The idea of an Alpine origin for the Etruscan civilization was also abandoned for a different reason by Raymond Bloch, who suggests that material evidence establishing an Etruscan presence in the Italian peninsula predates the arrival of the Raetians. In *The Etruscans*, Bloch writes:

The incidence of the Raetians is said to constitute historical proof that in ancient times the Etruscans came down from the North and crossed the Alps... What actually happened here was that correct facts were used to arrive at wrong conclusions. The presence of Etruscans in Raetia is certain. But it does not date back very far, nor to a hypothetical passage of the Etruscans through the Alpine valleys (Bloch 1958:54).

The most prominent scholars of Etruscan studies, equipped with a wealth of new ideas regarding Etruscan civilization, keep the dialogue on Etruscan origins alive and more vibrant than ever. They argue about the topic of Etruscan origins in the same fashion Herodotus and Dionysius did during classical times, in the form of questions and answers that Italian and non-

Italian scholars pose to one another, reminding us of a political debate enriched by nationalist emotions. In order to capture the nationalist flavor of this debate we should examine what the debaters are proposing.

Raymond Bloch, one of the most prominent non-Italian Etruscologists, wrote the following about Etruscan origins half a century ago:

The thesis of an oriental origin has much more validity. Many linguistic and archaeological facts seem to confirm it clearly. This explains why it has remained in great favor with scholars. Many characteristics of Etruscan civilization recall very closely what we know of the civilization of ancient Asia Minor (Bloch 1958:54).

From this general statement about Etruscan origins Bloch progresses to a more personal address directed to Massimo Pallottino's defense of an autochthonous origin of Etruscan civilization when he writes: "The tradition of an Oriental migration seems to me to retain all its validity" (Bloch 1958:63).

Massimo Pallottino, an eminent Italian authority in Etruscology, plays an important role not only in the dialogue about Etruscan origins, but also in the reflective discourse about the nature of archaeology as a science. Pallotino adds a clear polemic tone both to the dialogue of the role of archaeologists through time and to the debate on Etruscan origins, underlying the issue of nationalism, which, according to Pallottino, permeates this entire debate on Etruscan origins.

In his book *The Etruscans* (1958), Pallottino introduces the issue of Etruscan origins first by criticizing the superficiality with which "mythographers" have created and still continue to create false fables through time, and then by addressing the uncritical attitude of modern archaeologists in accepting these theories as true. Pallotino writes:

Much blame has been laid upon antiquity for inventing such founder-heroes as Romulus and Remus, for creating out of sheer fancy such people as the Aborigines or the Pelasgians. What ought we to say then of a modern science that created the Villanovans on the mere basis that certain primitive people in Italy had in common a certain type of cinerary urn, discovered for the first time at Villanova in Aemilia? (Pallottino 1955:19).

In this opening statement we notice not only Pallottino's rejection of the Nordic Alpine origins of Etruscan civilization promoted by non-Italian scholars including Freret, Niebhur and Muller, but

also a polemic reference to the unscientific approach in which these scholars have created what he considers to be fantastic fables. About the question of Etruscan origins Pallottino writes: "It is interesting to note that right from the beginning the problem of Etruscan origins was considered to be one of provenance and not of ethnic formation as is usual when nations belonging to historical times are being studied" (Pallottino 1955:47). This polarization of the problem weighed heavily upon the future development of the discussion. Pallottino argues that the question of provenance is not the correct question to ask, as the Etruscan civilization is found only on the Italian peninsula, and therefore is the sole product of Italian soil.

To reinforce his polemic critique against those archaeologists who promote a non-Italian origin of the Etruscans, Pallottino makes an interesting transition to a direct nationalistic debate when he writes:

Now the methodological basis of our discussion must be as follows: We must consider the concept of "Etruscan" as well defined, limited, and attached to a controllable historical reality: that of a nation that flourished in Etruria between the eighth and the first centuries B.C., possessing its own language and its own customs. Various ethnic, linguistic, political and cultural elements contributed to the formation of this historical reality. So as to make our meaning clearer we would like to point out that no one would dream of asking where Italians or Frenchmen came from originally; it is the formation of the Italian and French nations that we study (Pallottino 1955:68).

With these words Pallottino seems to transcend the strictly archaeological debate over Etruscan origins and to elaborate on the nature and role of archaeology itself. It is evident that this passage has a reflexive connotation, as Pallottino questions not only the role of archaeology and its methodological approach to the problems under investigation, but also the very definition of nationalism as commonly accepted in archaeological discourse. Pallottino argues that archaeologists and historians have the delicate task to reconstruct and present to the world the essence of past civilizations. This process of preservation and reconstruction should be conducted with objectivity on the part of social scientists who, being themselves the product of nations and cultural traditions, pose research questions already biased by their political and socioeconomic background which could obstruct the objectivity of archaeological research. In the case of Pallottino, it should be noted that he wrote against the archaeological domination of

German neo-humanism which valued Greek civilization over other pre-Roman cultures. In *A History of Earliest Italy*, Pallottino writes:

For almost a hundred years... the problems of pre-Roman Italy were more or less denied any intrinsic 'historicity'. Their study remained 'underdeveloped' by comparison with what was achieved during the same period in studies of the Greek and Roman world. The collection, analysis, interpretation and antiquarian understanding of the data recalls the piecemeal erudition of the eighteenth century. That such a state of affairs continued for so long, despite the advances of modern criticism, is explained above all by the prestige of establishment scholarship, especially German and German-language scholarship. Its dogmatic assumptions were often intolerantly imposed even in questions of methodology. Everything was judged by the touchstone of Greek civilization (a tendency which found its culmination and epitome in the neo-humanism of Helmut Berve), and the result was a lack of interest in, not to say contempt for, whatever was 'not Greek' and 'not classical'. (Pallottino 1991:9).

Within a nationalist archaeological discourse, Pallottino promotes a re-evaluation of the extensive research conducted during the early 19th century by the Italian scholar Giuseppe Micali which were undervalued by German scholarship. According to Pallottino, Micali's work from 1810, *L'Italia avanti il dominio di Roma*, provides a valuable source of information regarding pre-Roman Italic cultures and the development of Etruscan civilization (Pallottino 1991:7).

In order to evaluate the validity of Pallottino's criticism of archaeological methodology it is relevant to observe how historians and archaeologists from different nations present the question of Etruscan origins to their readers. This comparative analysis will demonstrate that what we study and accept as an objective analysis of past civilizations by scholars in one nation may be in conflict with what is written on the same topic by scholars from other nations.

4.3 Etruscan Origins: Discrepancies in Texts

Augusto Camera and Renato Fabietti have produced one of the most respected textbooks of early Italian history. This textbook, *Elementi di storia antica* (1969, 1973) has been adopted in Italy as the official textbook of Italian history by the Public National School Liceo Classico, which is the Italian National School specialized in classical studies and by the university department of Lettere Antiche, which is the Italian university program in classics. This textbook is divided into

two sections, the first volume *Oriente e Grecia* and the second volume *Roma*. The second chapter of the volume *Roma*, is entitled "Gli Etruschi" which includes an impressive description of Etruscan civilization. In regard to the problem of Etruscan origins Camera and Fabietti write:

The Etruscans, since the very beginning of history, have stimulated the curiosity of scholars who have theorized a variety of hypotheses about their origins. Today scholars have reached a general agreement on the assumption that Etruscan civilization developed and achieved its highest cultural expression on Italian soil thanks to the influence of cultural elements imported through commerce with other civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean and with other Italic populations living on Italian soil (Camera and Fabietti 1973:12 tr. Valeria Forte)

Here we can see Camera and Fabietti's assertion of an autochthonous origin of Etruscan civilization; it seems clear that they feel no need to discuss any other hypotheses about this issue. This generalization about autochthonous Etruscan origins found among Italian historians is not present in other texts discussing this same issue. Emeline Hill Richardson, an American expert in Mediterranean archaeology, in her book *The Etruscans* writes the following about Etruscan origins:

I myself, having been brought up as a Herodotean and then having tried conscientiously for several years to convert to a belief in Dionysius and the autochthonists, now find that I prefer Pliny's tradition of two migrations of foreigners from the east to central Italy, with an understratum of original inhabitants (Richardson 1976:5)

Donald R. Dudley, a prestigious British scholar, presents his interpretation of Etruscan origins in *The Romans*:

The modern science of Etruscology has revealed the culture of the Etruscans both as a thing in its own right and as a major element in the culture of early Italy. Its material remains are displayed in many museums, notably on a magnificent scale in the Villa Giulia in Rome and the Archaeological Museum in Florence. The great necropoleis, such as those of Tarquinia and Caere, with their chambered tombs and painted frescoes, bring thousands of people into direct contact with Etruscan civilization. None the less problems remain. The language is not fully understood. It is not of Indo-European origin; its alphabet is familiar and short inscriptions can be deciphered, but longer texts such as that in the museum of Zagreb are full of pitfalls. Nor has the debate on origins--autochthonous or immigrants from Asia?--yet been finally resolved. But increasingly it seems that the argument in favor of an Oriental origin as postulated by Herodotus is the stronger. If so, the Etruscans would fit very naturally into that phase of colonization in which many bands of adventurers, Greek, Punic and Oriental, left the overcrowded world of the Aegean and its coasts for the wider and emptier lands around the western Mediterranean (Dudley 1970:10).

Contrary to Dudley, Luisa Banti, a very respected Italian Etruscologist and author of the text *Il Mondo degli Etruschi* (1969) which was adopted as the official text of historical Italian education by the *Ente Per La Diffusione e L'Educazione Storica* in Italy, argues that the Etruscan civilization is the historical product of the Italian peninsula and that the Oriental themes found in Etruscan art are a reinterpretation of the artistic themes which reached Etruria through commerce. Banti states that the Etruscans, in their admiration of Greek art, adopted and reinterpreted Greek themes, names and styles as a way to confer a mythical legend to their own culture, which originated entirely on Italian land. Banti argues that the smaller an Etruscan settlement was, the more likely its inhabitants felt the need to enrich their tradition with mythical legends which would transform their otherwise anonymous town into a celebrated city of past glory, lost in the memory of time. As an example to support her thesis, Banti refers to the city of Cortona, whose mythical founder was thought to be Dardanous, founder of the city of Troy (Banti 1969:47).

Although the debate of Etruscan origins is still polarized on two contrasting theories, the tendency of contemporary international archaeologists supports an indigenous provenance. Among the new voices promoting the theory first proposed by Dionysius of Halikarnassos is Graeme Barker and Tom Rasmussen who write: "Virtually all archaeologists now agree that the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the 'indigenous' theory of Etruscan origins: the development of Etruscan culture has to be understood within an evolutionary sequence of social elaboration in Etruria (Barker and Rasmussen 1998:44). Barker and Rasmussen explore the question of origins following Pallottino's theory that the formation of the Etruscan civilization should be investigated rather than their origins. Barker and Rasmussen argue that the process of understanding Etruscan formation is a complex task due to multiple factors that interacted to shape the unique characteristics of Etruscan culture:

Explaining this process, however, is still far more difficult than describing it. For example, contact with the outside world, particularly with the Greeks and Phoenicians, was certainly an important factor within the final stages of this process, but scholars

disagree about the extent to which such contact was a cause of increasing cultural complexity in Etruria, or a result, or both (Barker and Rasmussen 1998:44).

The same tendency to emphasize the value of cultural formation over origins is expressed by Sybille Haynes who provides a general statement which evaluates the factors that contributed to form Etruscan civilization: "We can thus say that the Etruscans flourished at least from the tenth century BC onward and that – as is the case with most other nations – a great number of different ethnic, cultural, geographic, political, and linguistic factors contributed to the formation of their culture (Haynes 2000:4).

This new archaeological approach demonstrates that the focus of contemporary Etruscan scholarship has shifted from the question of origins to the question of cultural formation; an innovation that Pallottino introduced to Etruscan studies. The value of Pallottino's emphasis on formation is recognized in the methodological approach of international archaeologists Nigel Spivey and Simon Stoddart, who write:

Today there is little controversy, in contrast to the time when Pallottino first wrote in 1944, that the Etruscans were an indigenous people in Central Italy. They developed from a local Bronze-Age population (from at least 1200 BC), at times in intense interaction with outside groups, but not directly dependent on those external groups for their own development (Spivey and Stoddart 1990:19).

As we can see, a deep discrepancy of opinions is still at the very core of the debate on Etruscan origins. It seems that there is very little hope for any sort of reconciliation among Etruscan scholars at the present time. In light of this reality we need to accept the fact that our understanding of Etruscan civilization will be shaped significantly by the provenance of our sources of investigation. This marked discrepancy of opinion among Italian and non-Italian scholars does not find conclusive agreement with the introduction of the latest technological advances in archaeological investigation, the use of DNA testing, which, once more, sees scholars divided in their theories about Etruscan origins.

CHAPTER 5
CONTEMPORARY ETRUSCOLOGY

5.1 Polemic in Scientific Testing

The use of genetic testing in archaeology is a significant scientific innovation introduced during the last ten years with the hope of bringing some objective conclusions to many unresolved enigmas left by past civilizations. Among these enigmas, the case of Etruscan origins is one of the most discussed and one for which multiple and sophisticated DNA testing has been conducted by respected teams of European and American scientists. An intriguing aspect of DNA testing on Etruscan remains shows that even this ostensibly objective, scientific and unbiased testing has been used by Italian and non-Italian Etruscan scholars to support their views and to reach opposite conclusions, showing once again that the political aspect of the question of Etruscan origins permeates the scientific world also.

Mitochondrial DNA testing was conducted on Etruscan remains in 2004 and 2006 by two teams of scientists, one American and one British. The results of both tests have been published in the well respected journal, *The American Journal of Human Genetics*. In 2004, the team of Guido Barbujani, professor of genetics at the University of Ferrara, compared DNA of Etruscans with that of current populations in Italy, North Africa and Eastern European countries. His team came to the conclusion that the mitochondrial DNA of the Etruscans is similar to the DNA of the people now living in the region of Tuscany and also that it is different from the DNA of people living in other regions of Italy and other parts of Europe (Barbujani et al. 2004:702). There is also a similarity between Etruscan DNA and small groups of people in Germany, Cornwall, the southern coast of the Mediterranean and in Turkey. Barbujani's research resulted in the following summary:

Within the limits imposed by the sample size, the Etruscan sites appear to have rather homogeneous genetic characteristics. Their mitochondrial haplotypes are very similar,

but rarely identical, to those commonly observed in contemporary Italy and suggest that the links between Etruscans and eastern Mediterranean region were in part associated with genetic, and not only cultural, exchanges. (Barbujani et al. 2004:703)

Several genetic tests conducted on Etruscan remains have produced similar results, which indicate a common genetic pattern between Etruscans and populations in Asia Minor. The way in which these results have been interpreted has generated further controversies on Etruscan origins.

The supporters of the Herodotean thesis believe that this genetic testing validates an Oriental Etruscan origin. The results of these genetic tests have been received with great enthusiasm by the Turkish community, which proudly promotes the theory that the advanced and sophisticated Etruscan civilization was the historical product of Asia Minor and therefore a prominent part of Turkish historical tradition. Turkish newspapers have published the results of these genetic tests declaring that Turkey could establish without doubt a direct connection with the Etruscan past ("*DNA Shows Etruscans Come From Anatolia*," Turkish Daily News, 9 February 2007).

In Italy, however, the genetic results have reopened once again the polemic among scholars. This debate, thanks to the accessibility of electronic information and ease of its dissemination, is not restricted to a small group of Etruscan experts, but includes the participation of a great number of readers, thus bestowing on this topic a nationalist dimension. Alberto Palmucci, a prominent Etruscologist living in Italy today has reacted energetically to the clamorous Turkish news of the genetic findings, opening a dialogue with European and American scholars in both academic papers and electronic blogs, such as <http://archeoblog.net>. The various positions in the debate remind us again of the debate among writers throughout the history of Etruscology. In essence, Palmucci argues that although genetic testing on both humans and bovines has revealed similarities between ancient Etruscan DNA and the DNA of people and cattle found today in eastern regions, this study does not conclusively determine Etruscan origins (Palmucci 2007).

Palmucci introduces a very intriguing element to the debate of Etruscan origins when he argues that we should not assume that a common genetic DNA between Etruscans and Near Eastern populations proves the origin of the Etruscans in Asia Minor. Palmucci states that Etruscans may have moved from the Italian peninsula toward the eastern lands, and this migration may have taken the form of a circular pattern of departing from and returning to the Italian coasts (Palmucci, 2007). To validate this hypothesis Palmucci provides toponymical data, linguistic analysis, and references to the most spectacular archaeological artifacts left by the Etruscans, their impressive and eloquent frescoes left on the funerary chambers of their necropoleis.

5.2 Etruscan Funerary Frescoes

The Etruscans did not leave written documents; for this reason the visual representations of their daily life transmitted to us through the images of spectacular frescoes is of inestimable value. In this study, a brief discussion of Etruscan funerary frescoes is relevant to emphasize once again how nationalist implications permeate research into ancient iconography.

The highest artistic expression of Etruscan civilization can be found in the impressive necropoleis of Tarquinia. This ancient city, called *TarXna* in Etruscan language, is located on La Civita Hill, in the northern area of Latium; it reached its greatest splendor in the 4th century B.C.

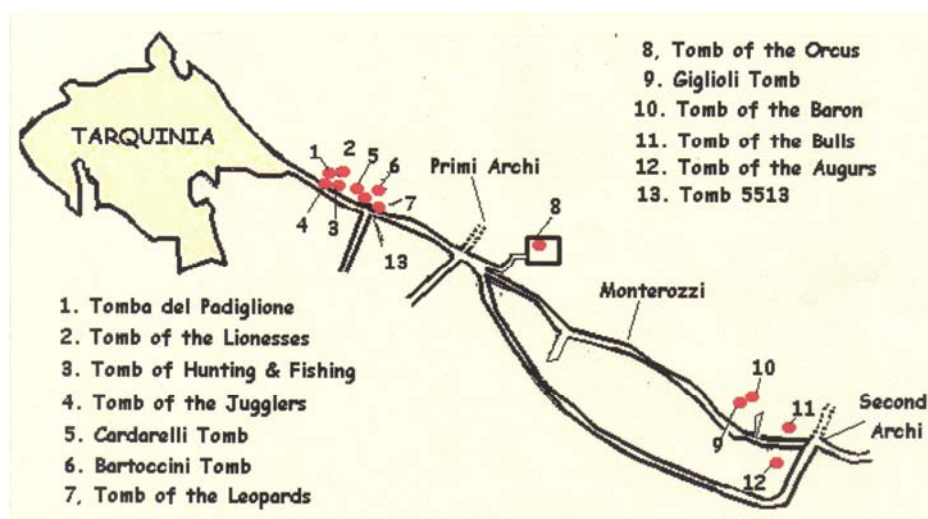


Figure 5.1 Tombs near Tarquinia

Very little is left of its urban settlement. Archaeological evidence exists in the forms of solid walls about five miles long, made of ashlar blocks of limestone, dating around the 4th century B.C. and, to the side of the city, remains of a sacred area called *Ara Reginae*, which, around the first half of the 4th century, was built as an Etruscan temple (Torelli 1986:57).

The real treasure of Tarquinia, however, is buried under the ground of this city and plays a crucial role for the historical reconstruction of Etruscan civilization. The impressive necropoleis of Tarquinia with chambered tombs and painted frescoes are not only of spectacular beauty and artistic value, but very eloquent visual documents preserved for thousand of years which reveal the fascinating lifestyle of the Etruscan urban aristocracy (Banti 1969:101).

The architecture preserved in these tombs reveals that wealthy Etruscans built their funerary chambers around a corridor of access with steps carved into the side of the hill, leading to a large rectangular chamber where the bodies of the dead were placed. Unblemished stones were used for walls and ceilings, which came to life with frescoes depicting a large variety of themes inspired by daily life, such as banquets and flute players (found on the front and right wall of the Tomb of the Leopards), scenes of hunting and fishing (found on the front wall of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing), dancers (found on the right wall of the Tomb of Triclinio), and scenes of wrestlers (found on the right wall of the Tomb of the Auguri) (Banti 1969:110-112).



Figure 5.2 Flute Player – Tomb of Leopards



Figure 5.3 Dancers – Tomb of Triclinio



Figure 5.4 Wrestlers – Tomb of Auguri

Although funerary chambers are found in Europe, the Levant, Asia and Central America, (Fagan 2001:281) the highly elaborate decorations found in the funerary chambers of Tarquinia are unique to the Etruscan necropoleis. For this reason, many Italian archaeologists refer to the frescoes in the tombs as material evidence to support the thesis that the Etruscans are native to the Italian peninsula. The most significant archaeological evidence put forward in this debate are the frescoes found in the necropolis of Monterozzi, situated on a ridge southeast of the ancient city of Tarquinia (Banti 1969:102). This necropolis contains the most important painted tombs in Etruria. The funerary chambers at Monterozzi are, for the most part, rock-cut chamber tombs dating from the 6th to the 4th centuries B.C. Today the locations of more than one hundred and fifty painted tombs are known, and in many cases the frescoes in these tombs are well preserved.

As discussed earlier, for a civilization whose history has not been preserved in the form of written documents, these painted scenes, untouched for hundreds of years, are of vital archaeological importance to the reconstruction of a culture buried in the past. The images from these frescoes enlighten us on possible elements of Etruscan social structure and may provide a means to reconstruct some aspects of daily life in Etruscan times. One significant example in this regard is the knowledge gained about the high social status of aristocratic Etruscan women (Bonfante 1986:237). Theopompus informs us that the unique structure of Etruscan social organization gave women equal freedom to participate in social and political life and Etruscan women engaged in social events together with men (Theopompus 1909). This advanced status for women is a unique Etruscan element that is not known from any other culture of the time.



Figure 5.5 Banquet – Tomb of Leopards

The importance of these funerary frescoes is relevant in understanding the unique nature of Etruscan social aspects as in the case of women's status in Etruria. Material evidence for the high social status of Etruscan women can be found on the frescoes in the Tomb of the Leopards, dating to the 5th century B.C (Banti 1969:112). This fresco represents three matrimonial *clines* (couches) designed for both men and women. This fresco represents a unique scene, as aristocratic women in other cultures of the time were excluded from banqueting with men. Further details in this fresco suggest a social equality among aristocratic men and women in Etruscan society; we can observe women and men conversing together and wearing the same crowns of laurel, suggesting that symbols of status in Etruscan society were similar for men and women and conversations between the two genders were taking place during these social events. This unique aspect of social equality between genders was addressed by Dionysius (Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, Book I, ch. 30) to support an autochthonous origin of the Etruscan civilization.

In the same fashion, through this comparative analysis between classical literary sources and iconographic evidence surviving on the walls of Etruscan funerary chambers, scholars have attempted to gain more knowledge about the origins of Etruscan civilization. More specifically,

one spectacular fresco found in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing seems to be a vital element in understanding Etruscan origins.



Figure 5.6 Tomb of Hunting and Fishing

This fresco dates to approximately 520 B.C. and is characterized as a landmark in classical painting for it marks the earliest time in which man is not depicted as dominating his environment. According to Etruscologist Luisa Banti, the major indicators of non-human dominance in this fresco are the birds flying over a boat transporting men; the birds are proportionally larger than the human figures. Therefore the birds, rather than the men, are the featured elements represented in the fresco (Banti 1973:75).

Based on the historical writing left by Mirsilio of Methymna, Alberto Palmucci believes that the impressive fresco in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing can clarify the origins and the nature of the Etruscan civilization. Palmucci argues that the Greek historian Mirsilio of Methymna relates that the Etruscans called themselves Pelasgians, which means storks, and that the Etruscans, following the flights of the storks, would migrate from land to land through the

seasons in search of better fishing conditions. Palmucci believes that the large size of the birds in this fresco is not an innovative element in the history of art, but rather a very realistic representation of large storks, which were guiding the seasonal voyages of the Etruscans. What was once regarded as a generic hunting and fishing scene is considered by Palmucci to be an historical visual document validating the information already related to us by Mirsilio, suggesting the Etruscans were native to the Italian peninsula and later migrated East (Palmucci).

Following this same logic and referring to the writing of Virgil, according to whom the Etruscans departed from Corito (later called Tarquinia) sailing east and then returning to Etruscan shores, Palmucci reinforces his conclusion that the Etruscans were native to the Italian peninsula and that from Italy they migrated east in time of need, later to sail back toward the Tyrrhenian shores (Palmucci).

In order to support this thesis of circular migration originating from the Tyrrhenian coast, Palmucci cites toponymic data and linguistic evidence left on the Stele of Lemnos (an island in the eastern Aegean), a funerary monument written in a script that might be described as a combination of Etruscan and Greek (fig 5.7). Palmucci argues that this stele was left on Lemnos by Etruscans migrating to the East and not vice versa.



Figure 5.7 Lemnos stele

Palmucci is one of the most active classicists in favor of an autochthonous origin of Etruscan civilization, and one who engages in the Etruscan debate at many levels. His comments and opinions are supported by his impressive knowledge of Etruscan civilization and he expresses them in the form internet blogs in which he debates experts from around the world (Palmucci 2007). When we read Palmucci's lively response to the many studies supporting an Oriental origin of Etruscan civilization, we notice that the debate over the Etruscan origins has not lost its energy through time, but indeed has permeated the most sophisticated media and involves not only expert Etruscologists but enthusiasts as well.

5.3 Etruscan Origins: A New Approach

After debating Etruscan origins from two very polarized points of view that have remained basically unchanged for over 2,000 years, we should perhaps approach the Etruscan question anew. Today anthropological theories on transnationalism consider the nature of cultures that are created and develop across geographic borders (Lewellen, 2002). Anthropological theories analyzing the formation of civilizations and their cultural expressions across fixed national borders can expand archaeological horizons toward new solutions and can offer an alternative approach to the question of origins.

We have seen that the question of a civilization's origins carries political and nationalist implications as it requires a discussion of current national borders that includes political and economic factors in relation to rights to the archaeological wealth of that civilization and, perhaps above all, the identity of the people today who are descended from that civilization. By posing the question of Etruscan origins in relation to a land of origin we want to define the nature of Etruscan civilization within the context of political nations that gave birth to that national culture. Archaeological historian Glyn Daniel writes:

The Etruscan remains were made known to English readers by George Dennis's *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* (1848), a delightfully written and widely read work. Dennis was persuaded of the extreme importance of the Etruscans in spreading Mediterranean civilization to northern and north-western Europe... (Daniel 1976:111)

Theories of transnational migration teach us that cultures are indeed much more fluid than national borders, and suggest that perhaps some Etruscan scholars may have complicated the problem of Etruscan cultural origins by wishing to frame this civilization within some defined territorial or national border. The reality is that the question of Etruscan origins in relation to Italian nationalism which has been discussed through time and remains a relevant concept for us today was not a significant cultural reference for the Etruscans of their time.

In analyzing transnational migration Ted Lewellen refers to the concept of deterritorialization, which is the process by which the idea of nations and states breaks down and gives rise to the phenomenon of a deterritorialized space, which is essentially a social space defined in terms of social networks rather than in relation to political or geographical boundaries (Lewellen 2002:151). Lewellen notes that even the concept of community, which has traditionally been defined in relation to territorial boundaries separating insiders from outsiders, becomes, in the case of transnational migrating communities, a much more fluid concept. Lewellen writes: "Migrant communities may have very ambiguous and quite fluid boundaries" (Lewellen 2002:151).

It seems that this theoretical discourse based on the concept of deterritorialization is pertinent to the archaeological question of cultural origins, as it addresses the core question under investigation: the essence of the nation-state idea. We have seen in the previous sections devoted to the political development of the Italian nation through history that a clear notion of nations and states emerged only after the 15th century, with the rise of modern Europe, its colonial domination and its imperialistic expansion. Before that time, political alliances may be seen in a variety of political organizations between feudal lords, kings, city-states, Popes, regional kings and occasional political alliances created at a local level.

Etruscan culture, as seen earlier, was likely characterized by hybrid elements which, in combination, created a unique cultural expression on Italian land. Lewellen defines the nature of transnational cultures as a hybrid combination of both home and host, requiring that

researchers develop new methods to examine cultural identity (Lewellen 2002:152). Transnationalism is indeed a refreshing theoretical approach that could be applied to the question of Etruscan origins in opposition to a discourse traditionally rooted in the political concept of Italian nationalism. In order to understand the relationship between the development of Italian archaeology and Italian nationalism, we must analyze some historical events that have shaped the discipline of archaeology within Italian politics of national colonialism and fascism, because it seems that when this nation was formed in a political sense, or when she engaged in colonial expansion, as occurred during fascism, archaeology became a major propagandistic tool to promote specific national political messages.

Massimiliano Munzi, a prominent Italian archaeologist, in his article "Italian Archaeology in Libya From Colonial Romanita to Decolonization of the Past" (2004), describes how in Italy during fascism, archaeology became a crucial political instrument to promote the idea of Italian rights over the African continent based on the historical Roman expansion on Libyan land (Munzi 2004:75). Munzi argues that during the fascist domination the idea of Romanita permeated Italian imperialistic colonization in Libya through major archaeological excavations aimed to reveal grandiose Roman ruins on Libyan territories. Munzi believes that the fascist military and political mission conducted in Libya was supported by an organized archaeological effort conducted by Italian antiquarians and archaeologists who were driven by fascist ideology (Munzi 2004:79). Munzi illustrates how the Roman idea of empire was a crucial political instrument to justify Italian colonial expansion in Libya. He asserts that one of the factors that favored the spreading of propagandistic Romanita in Libya was the economic resources given in the form of grants to archaeologists who would lead impressive excavations aimed to bring to life entire portions of ancient Roman coastal towns. According to Munzi, in this propagandistic message of Romanita, the way of life of the past became a model for modern days in which the ancient form of Roman irrigation became a model to follow for the present day, with the ancient farms used as housing for the military colonists.

Munzi points out that archaeology was given special attention during the two trips when Mussolini visited Sabratha and wrote in the visitors' book "Between the Rome of the past and the one of the future" and again when Mussolini celebrated Leptis Magna with its arch of Septimius Severus (Munzi 2004:85). Mussolini also visited Hadrian's baths and the Severan forum, a site still dedicated to Mussolini and still called today "Mussolini's Belvedere". Munzi writes that archaeology played a very significant role again in 1926 and 1927 when Mussolini went to Tripoli and visited the arch of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus and attended a performance of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, performed in the recently restored Roman theatre (Munzi 2004:85).

Munzi believes that Mussolini's idea to recreate his persona as a new Augustus promoting archaeological excavations can be observed not only in Mussolini's behavior as the new Caesar, but also in the behavior of his governors in Libya, as it was through them that archaeological advances were accomplished in this region (Munzi 2004:86). The financial support of Giuseppe Volpi accelerated archaeological excavations while the *soprintendente* Renato Bartoccini promoted the great excavations at Sabratha and Leptis Magna and the preparation of the Tripoli and Homs-Lebda museum. Munzi writes that Volpi would often pose as a Roman proconsul and that this title represented him in a Latin inscription that can still be seen on the wall of Tripoli Castle (Munzi 2004:86). It is clear that this program to revitalize the glory of past Rome was a very sophisticated project involving multiple steps of indoctrination.

One important question raised by Munzi that is relevant in the discussion of nationalist archaeology is whether this kind of archaeology influences the way excavations are conducted on archaeological sites and the role archaeologists play in the methodology of excavations. Munzi tells us that fascism, in order to promote *Romanita* as a propaganda instrument in the Italian political expansion in Libya, employed antiquarians and archaeologists who became political instruments for the ruling regime (Munzi 2004:79). According to Munzi, the archaeologists who took part in the revitalization of *Romanita* in Libya were personally allied

with fascist political ideology. For this reason they were able to obtain abundant ministerial grants to conduct impressive archaeological excavations allowing them to bring to light significant portions of ancient coastal towns (Munzi 2004:79).

Another problematic aspect of nationalistic archaeology described by Munzi is that during the Mussolini political campaign in Libya, archaeologists were under political pressure to bring to light the glory of ancient Rome, and in so doing they sacrificed post-classical strata (Munzi 2004: 80). Munzi adds that archaeological excavations at that time were conducted very quickly and in fact often hurried, causing the removal of archaeological material not relevant to the period of interest. According to Munzi, many archaeologists who took part in these colonial excavations lacked a consistent methodological approach to archaeological excavation. In fact, Munzi argues that they operated in a way already outdated in Italy by the beginning of the 20th century (Munzi 2004:80). This statement is very significant as it demonstrates, at least in the case of Italian archaeology, that this form of nationalist archaeology had negative repercussions also on the methodological development of archaeological excavation; instead of progressing toward more sophisticated and innovative techniques, it saw a regression to an outdated *modus operandi* at odds with the empirical goals of the discipline itself.

The manipulation of archaeological excavation of Roman sites for the glorification and justification of fascism and Italian colonization is described in another interesting article written by Oliver Gilkes aimed to analyze the interesting political propaganda promoted by Italian fascism in Albania. Gilkes describes the archaeological relationships developed between Italy and Albania during the 1920s and 1930s aimed to create myths of cultural relations between Albania and Italy in order to further Italian political interests in Albania (Gilkes 2003:31)

Of importance to the debate on the political relationship among archaeology, nationalism and Lewellen's concept of deterritorialization is another controversial issue highly debated today among archaeologists and social scientists: the question of ownership of cultural antiquities. In *Who Owns Antiquity*, James Cuno poses a very provocative question about the legal rights of

individual nations to claim possession of the archaeological wealth found within their national borders. Cuno argues that national borders have changed through time, and that the current geographic configuration of national borders is, for the most part, the result of recent political dynamics that may not be aligned with the antiquity of archaeological evidence that has existed through centuries on territories.

A controversial case that Cuno addresses in his book concerns several sculptures of the Parthenon in Athens, from which, under the orders of Thomas Bruce and some obscure permission from the Ottoman authorities, written only in Italian and given by the Ottoman court, the 7th Earl of Elgin and British ambassador to the Ottoman court in Constantinople ordered the removal of several sculptures from the Parthenon between 1799 and 1803 that were then transferred to Britain (Cuno 2008:ix). The legality of the Earl of Elgin's action remains a debated issue due to the ambiguous nature of the document which does not specify what artifacts may be removed from Greece to Britain. Therefore no legal case can be made against Britain's ownership of the sculptures, regardless of the constant demand by Greece to regain ownership of this artistic wealth.

In discussing this case, Cuno argues that by assigning to specific nations the right to own their archaeological wealth we promote and encourage a close interrelation between political nationalism and archaeology. According to Cuno, archaeological wealth should transcend national borders and belong to humanity. Cuno writes:

It is a sad and even tragic irony that in the new age of globalization in which we live today, just as the world is getting smaller and smaller and more and more rapidly interconnected and interdependent, our common, ancient cultural heritage is being divided up and claimed by modern nation-states as theirs, the property of only some of the world's people, made by their alleged ancestors for them and deprived of its rich diversity of sources and evidence of cultural influences (Cuno 2008:161).

Cuno's observation presents a very complex issue in terms of legal responsibility that may only be resolved through international cultural organizations and world cooperation.

5.4 Debating the Etruscans: Voices From the Past, Voices From the Present

Archaeology is one of the social sciences that has been quick to incorporate sophisticated technology during the last fifty years. In fact, today many different scientific technologies are applied daily in archaeological excavations, notably in the process of dating and analysis of artifacts. We have seen in this study that the use of DNA analysis is also employed today in archaeological cases dealing with genetic origins. But modern technology permeates not only the practical methodological approach in archaeological excavation. Today technology, in the form of internet blogs, is commonly employed in archaeological debate among scholars and enthusiasts. The most remarkable aspect about the debate on Etruscan origins is the democratic nature of the debate itself. Throughout thousands of years scholars have engaged in a fervid dialogue in which the voices of past scholars are participating in an open debate with the voices of current scholars as well as the interested public. If we wish to define democracy as the inclusion of all voices, then the debate on Etruscan origins in archaeology democratically represents a dialog which includes both the voices of the past and present along with the voices of scholars from different schools of thought and in different geographical regions. Perhaps the democratic nature of this debate is the highest contribution that Etruscan archaeology has given to its discipline. Blogs are an example of a larger effort to bring the non-specialist public into the effort of interpretation.

We have observed that a chronological reconstruction of scholarly discussion on Etruscan origins has seen opposing ideas since practically the very first written documents were produced about this civilization. We saw later that this polarized discussion has remained almost unchanged and has been debated mainly between Italian and non-Italian archaeologists, but what is new in this discussion is a process of democratization determined mainly by the intervention of technology which, through the introduction of blogs, has opened the debate to a much wider audience and has therefore brought a significant number of new voices into this discussion.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

My brief analysis on the interaction between archaeology and nationalism in relation to the question of Etruscan origins has indicated some interesting tendencies that archaeological research has displayed through time. Italy, a nation famous for her natural beauty and for the immense artistic wealth found within her national borders, is also the nation that participated in the birth of archaeology at its most embryonic state. The attention of many nations has been directed to the pattern that Italian archaeology has followed through time as it flourished through the Neoclassical period and regressed during fascism. Due to the spectacular and abundant archaeological wealth layered on Italian soil through millennia of history, the enormous responsibility of this nation and of her archaeologists to its cultural heritage has high resonance in the development of world archaeology.

My study on the debate of Etruscan origins has sought to provide insight on some of the very complex approaches taken through time to deal with an archaeological question. It is not an easy task to discuss Etruscan archaeology due to the complexity of the subject; therefore my analysis has not provided a final answer to the Etruscan enigma. The scope of my discussion on Etruscan origins is aimed to present the nature of an archaeological question that, posed at the beginning of history, has continued to be debated through the most crucial Italian historical developments and while the nation herself was undergoing delicate political transitions toward national unity.

My analysis suggests that the complexity of archaeological research transcends time and space and therefore contains issues perhaps at times not fully understood. Whenever an archaeological question is under investigation, archaeology as a science redefines its focus; as the archaeological question decides the political, economic or cultural orientation of the

research that will be conducted. We have observed that archaeological research has been influenced by political and nationalist elements which have raised the question of the role of archaeology through time in relation to the concept of nationalism and national borders. In this very complex intellectual panorama, the unique aspect of the issue of Etruscan origins is the coherence by which the debate has been maintained through time. From its birth at the dawn of history through our present day the debate over Etruscan origins has included the participations of several nations and voices from the past and the present continuously engaged in this vivid discussion.

Italian archaeologists have operated in this very complex cultural and political reality, at times under severe political pressure; they have been pioneers, innovators and mediators, and at times, the political instrument of nationalistic propaganda. Respected scholars and sometimes agents for the state, Italian archaeologists have conducted research under constant world scrutiny. Italian archaeologists and this analysis have inherited the question of Etruscan origins from classic authors and with dedication have kept the debate alive, proposing different perspectives that continue to be discussed.

The issue of Etruscan cultural formation is perhaps the most important in the debate over Etruscan origins, as it introduced the innovative concept of formation over origins, a concept that can be applied in similar archaeological investigations. Political propaganda and nationalistic bias have infiltrated Italian archaeology at times in relation to specific political periods; however, the essence of Italian archaeology has always remained international in nature, as Italian archaeologists have always kept open channels of communication with international archaeologists even at times of great disagreement, and have provided to the international community access to Italian archaeological research. It could have not been otherwise as the unique artistic wealth of the Italian nation today is the product of infinite cultural interactions that have enriched this fortunate land since the beginning of time.

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