

The Etruscans

The Etruscans

- **Tyrsenoi or Tyrrhenians (Greek)**
- **Tusci or Etrusci (Latin)**
- **Rassena or Rasna (Etruscan)**

The Etruscans

- **Importance of archaeology**
- **3-age system**
- **Archaeological excavation**
 - **Material remains of past activity**
 - **Stratification**
 - **Seriation**

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- **Dating techniques**
 - **Archaeological record**
 - **Context**
 - **Relative chronology**
 - **Absolute dating**
 - **Technologies**

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- Radiocarbon dating
- Dendrochronology (tree rings)
- Luminescence dating
- Electron spin resonance (ESR)
- Uranium series dating
- Potassium-argon dating

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- **Fission tracking dating**
- **Amino-acid racemization**
- **Obsidian dating**
- **Archaeomagnetic dating**
- **Pollen analysis**

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Key Events

(mid-2nd millennium BC)

- **Bronze Age: Western Mediterranean**
- **Bronze vs. copper: ancient “oil”**
- **Superpowers in the East:**
 - **Egypt**
 - **Hittites**
 - **Mitanni**

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- Invasions of the “Sea Peoples”
- Civilizations destroyed
- Emergence of many smaller powers
- Phoenician city-states
- Western Mediterranean develops

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Ancient Etruria

- **About the size of Wales, in UK**
- **North to south: about 250 km**
- **East to west: 150 km**
- **Bounded E. and S. by Tiber River,
N. by Arno River, W. Tyrrhenian Sea**

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Southern Etruria

- Volcanic soil (tufa)
- Heavily forested
- Flooding rivers
- Crater lakes

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Northern Etruria

- Sandstone and limestone soil
- Western zone of hills
- Eastern fertile basin
- 2 principal metal-bearing regions

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Bronze Age (@ 1500 BC)

- **The Apennines & Ligurian Alps**
- **Some contact with lower Po Valley**
- **Flourishing bronze age culture**
- **But limited influence of Adriatic corridor--central Europe & Greece**

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Mycenaean Civilization

- **Walled cities, fine palaces, tombs of kings, extensive trading**
- **Later Homeric poems and legends**
- **But, knowledge about west central Italy (i.e., Etruria) is very meager**

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Collapse of the Bronze Age

- Invasions of the “Sea Peoples”**
- Destruction of Mycenaean culture**
- Collapse of Hittites and nearly Egypt**
- Only minor powers survive**
- Italy becomes even more isolated**

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Pre-Historic Apennine Cultures

- Late Middle Bronze Age
- Whole length of peninsula
- Emilia, Apulia, Sicily (east)
- Spoke Indo-European language?
- Inhumation

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Proto-Villanovans

(12-10th Cent. BC)

- **South Alpine valleys**
- **Cremation displaces inhumation**
- **Pottery urnfields**
- **Bronze objects found**

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Villanovan Culture

(9th– 8th Centuries BC)

- **Archaeological term—cultural traits**
- **Named after site near Bologna**
- **Their sites—later Etruscan cities**
- **Fine bronze arms and armor**

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Villanovan Culture

(continued)

- Villanovan communities very small
- Veii—300-600 persons (est.)
- Wattle & daubed huts; smoke vents
- Huts were oval; roofs thatched

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Villanovan Cemeteries

- Burial practices change over time
- Cemeteries around habitation sites
- *Pozzetto* (well) type graves
- Rite of inhumation also used
- *Fosse* (trench) type graves

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Villanovan Urns

- Characteristic shape
- Often with single handle
- Made of brown/black *impasto*
- Italic *fibulae* or brooches
- Some Greek pottery starts to appear

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Contact with Greece

- No direct Villanovan contact with Aegean before early 8th century BC
- Greek “Geometric” pottery appears
- Greek trinkets, pottery cups in Italic graves in northern Lazio & Tuscany

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Greek Colonies in Italy

- **First settlement: Ischia (Pithecusae)**
- **Magna Graecia and Campania**
- **Villanovan II—increased use of iron**
- **Iron smelting and importing of more ore from Tuscany**

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Phoenician Colonies

- Unclear part played by Phoenicians
- Founded numerous trading sites
- Western Sicily, Sardinia
- Carthage

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Etruscan Language

- No problem of decipherment
- Script perfectly legible
- Do we understand Etruscan?
- Only if we possessed a key
- No closely related language(s)

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Etruscan Language

- **Isolate language**
- **Few bilingual inscriptions only**
- **Scarcity and brevity of texts**
- **Unilateral contents**
- **No literary texts**

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Etruscan Language

- **Direct sources: only archaeological**
 - Except Zagreb mummy
 - Capua roof tile
 - Pyrgi tablets
 - Sarcophagus of Laris Pulenas

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Etruscan Language

- **Indirect sources:**
 - **Glosses and other writers**
 - **Etrusco-Latin elements**
 - **Etruscan surviving in place names**
 - **Latin version of Etruscan texts**

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Etruscan Language

- **Known script, unknown language**
- **No narratives, no history, poetry**
- **Most inscriptions short with names, titles, few nouns, numbers, verbs**
- **No parallel language(s)**

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Etruscan Language

- Learned to write (mid 7th cent. BC)
- Writing on pottery and tombs
- Adapted from Chalcidian(Gk) script
- Writing from right to left; some boustrophedon

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History of Etruria

- Parallels the “Orientalizing” (7thBC), “Archaic” (6thBC), “Classical” (5thBC) and “Hellenistic” (4thBC) periods of Greece and Rome
- Few Etruscan records; depends on biased later Greek and Roman authors

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History of Etruria

- Etruria and the sea—thalassocracy
- Fearsome pirates
- Invention of the *rostra*
- Tyrrhenian and Adriatic Seas
- Naval supremacy (7th/6th centuries)

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History of Etruria

- Villanovans (8th/7th BC) transformed by Orientalizing phenomenon?
- Arrival of “new peoples” to Etruria?
- Sharp rise: living standards/wealth
- Exports: copper, lead, iron, bronze

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Relations with Other Powers

- Naval clashes and war with Greeks
- Battles: Elba, Etruria, Sicily, Sardinia (c. 540 BC)
- Carthaginians and Etruscans allies
- Sanctuary at Pyrgi (early 5th BC)
- Mid-3rd BC, no trace of Etruscan navy