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978-1-107-68701-1 - Etruria and Rome: Thirlwall Prize Essay 1923

R. A. L. Fell

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PART ONE

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH
OF THE ETRUSCAN POWER

§ 1

THE COMING OF THE ETRUSCANS TO ITALY

THE ETRUSCANS, like some other peoples in history, have suffered both from undue disparagement and from an exaggeration of their importance. In the early part of last century there was a wave of "etrusco-mania" when enthusiasts represented the Etruscans as the parents of European civilization: even Greek art was derived from Etruscan. An exaggerated reaction set in, and the Etruscans were relegated to a place of unimportance, largely through the great authority of Mommsen, who ranked their art lowest in the early art of the Italian peoples¹, and dogmatized on the question of the origin of the Etruscans as one hardly worthy of serious enquiry. That Etruscan art is little but debased imitation is maintained by Martha in his great work on the subject: all that is good in it is Greek; thus a particularly fine mirror bearing an Etruscan inscription "ne peut être que d'une main grecque²." Even Dennis, whose *Cities and Cemeteries* is still a classic, and who does not usually err on the side of underrating the Etruscans, adopts the familiar phrases of

¹ *Roman History* (E.T.), I. pp. 242, 248-9; cf. Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 309.

² *L'Art Étrusque*, p. 547.

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“the dark and gloomy character of the Etruscan superstition” and “the juggleries of priestcraft¹.” Now the tide appears to be turning once more; modern historians such as De Sanctis, Pais and Meyer give a prominent place to the Etruscan power in the early history of Italy; while archaeological discoveries such as that of the Apollo-group at Veii have renewed interest in the Etruscan contribution to later Roman art.

The loss of all histories of the Etruscans (even those by Romans, such as the Emperor Claudius and others) cannot be too much regretted: this unique and remarkable people only appears fitfully in histories of Rome, always in a hostile light, and in scattered allusions in other Greek and Latin authors, which have been dealt with exhaustively in Müller’s *Die Etrusker* (revised by W. Deecke, 1877). Apart from this fragmentary literary evidence our knowledge of the Etruscans has to be gleaned from their surviving monuments.

The Etruscans have formed the subject of abundant research and controversy in modern times. The most disputed question in this connexion is that of the origin of the Etruscans, and of their possible affinities with other peoples. On this, “the Etruscan question” *par excellence*, it is necessary to say a few words, as the view taken of this cannot but influence deeply our whole view of early Italian history.

As is well known, practically all ancient authors follow Herodotus in asserting that the Etruscans came from Asia or more particularly from Lydia. The story in Herodotus (I. 94) of the great famine which the Lydians tried to meet by taking food only on alternate days and occupying themselves on the other days with games of dice, knuckle-bones, and ball, till after eighteen years the King Atys had recourse to the expedient of sending half the population under his

¹ *Op. cit.* I. pp. lvi–lvii; cf. Momm. *R.H.* I. pp. 189–90.

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son Tyrsenus to find a fresh home overseas, is of course not to be pressed too far; but it does at least point to a tradition current in Lydia in the fifth century B.C. of a great migration thence by sea in an earlier age, even if the connexion of the historic Tyrseni with Lydia is due to a verbal mistake, and the mention of the Ὀμβρικοί in whose land the Lydians settled to a false inference on the part of the historian. The unanimity of later Greek and Latin writers (with a single exception) concerning the Lydian origin of the Etruscans seems to rest solely on the authority of Herodotus; but it may be taken as evidence that they knew of no other tradition which they considered preferable.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (i. 30)¹ alone rejects the Herodotean account, on grounds of the difference between the Etruscans and the Lydians of his own time in language, religion and customs; and records² (without, however, accepting it as true) a different account given by Hellanicus, namely, that the Pelasgians landed in the Ionian Gulf, settled at Croton in the interior of Italy, and thence conquered Tyrrhenia and changed their name to Tyrrhenes. The story of the Pelasgians, driven out of Thessaly, founding Spina on the Adriatic (Dionys. i. 18) is probably also derived from Hellanicus, and by him from Herodotus who also mentions Pelasgians living now at Creston (identified with Croton, later called Corthonia, i.e. Cortona in Etruria, by Dionys. i. 29) and formerly in Thessaly, but does not identify them with the Etruscans³. The

¹ Dionysius speaks of the Etruscans as "not having the same language or manners as any other nation (οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἔθνει οὔτε ὁμόγλωσσον οὔτε ὁμοδίαιτον)"; and so far none of the partial resemblances which have been found between the Etruscans and other peoples amounts to a proof of identity.

² Dionys. i. 28. 3.

³ Hdt. i. 57: Πελασγῶν τῶν ὑπὲρ Τυρσηνῶν Κρηστῶνα πόλιν οἰκεόντων. If Herodotus were here following Hellanicus, he would surely not have passed over the latter's identification of Pelasgi and Tyrseni,

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landing of these Pelasgi on the Adriatic coast of Italy seems to be simply a deduction of Hellanicus from their presence at Cortona and their previous abode in Thessaly, and therefore of no value as evidence as to the entrance of the Etruscans into Italy; and he suggests no reason why these Pelasgi changed their name to Tyrrheni. The statement of Hellanicus, that the people who owned the land in Italy which was known in historic times as Tyrrhenia or Etruria came thither from Thessaly across the Adriatic, has found no followers in ancient or modern times, and appears to be due to the vague untrustworthy use of the name Pelasgi. It is not too much to say that no historical conclusions can be based on any of these legends of Pelasgic migrations and settlements.

These mysterious Pelasgians appear again connected with the Tyrrhenes as early inhabitants of Lemnos and Athens. Thucydides says of the barbarians of the Chalcidic peninsula τὸ δὲ πλείστον Πελασγικὸν τῶν καὶ Ἀημῶν ποτε καὶ Ἀθήνας Τυρσηνῶν οἰκησάντων, and Herodotus speaks of the Pelasgians being driven out of Attica and settling, amongst other places, in Lemnos where they remained till its capture by Miltiades¹. Now as to what fact, if any, may lie behind the solitary allusion quoted above to a Tyrrhene settlement in Athens, it is useless to speculate²; as to Lemnos we are on somewhat firmer ground, through the discovery of an inscription³ there in

which is contrary to the Lydian story of Hdt. i. 67. (Grenier, *Bologne Villanovienne et Étrusque*, p. 466.)

¹ Thuc. iv. 109. 4; Hdt. vi. 137-8.

² Cf. Callimachus *ap. Schol. Ar. Aves*, 832: Τυρσηνῶν τεῖχοςμα Πελασγικόν.

³ Pauli, *Eine vorgriechische Inschrift von Lemnos* (= *Altitalische Forschungen*, Bd. 11); Karo (*Bull. Paletn. Ital.* xxv (1904), p. 25, n. 4) describes it as similar to the Etruscan inscriptions but distinct from them; cf. Brizio in *Atti e Mem. R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Romagna*, 1886, pp. 240-1. See further *Inscr. Graec.* xii. 8. 1, and the literature there quoted.

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a language not far removed from that of the Etruscans of Italy. It is natural, too, to identify with these Tyrrhenes of Lemnos the "Tursha," a maritime folk who appear in Egyptian inscriptions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C.¹, but it does not of course follow that the Tyrrhenes of the eastern Mediterranean are identical with the Tyrrhenes of Italy, unless it can be shewn that there are other grounds for this identification. Of the native legends little or nothing survives to shew what tradition the Etruscans themselves held concerning their early history. It is not certain that they believed their ancestors to have entered Italy by sea from Asia Minor, nor yet by land from Central Europe; the myth of the lawgiver Tages, who sprang from the soil a child yet gray-headed with wisdom², does not imply that the nation as a whole claimed to be autochthonous as the Athenians did, but the localization of the myth at Tarquinii, which also figures in the other confused legends of Tyrrhenus and Tarchon as the metropolis of Etruria, points to the diffusion of the Etruscans from the south-west northwards rather than to a migration across the Apennines.

The theory of the Lydian origin of the Etruscans was first seriously challenged in modern times by Niebuhr³, who advanced the contrary opinion that the Etruscans entered Italy across the Alps—an opinion supported as was claimed by the existence of inscriptions in an Etruscan⁴ dialect in the Trentino, by some parallels in place-names

¹ Meyer, I. 2, § 515; Pauli, *op. cit.* pp. 227 ff.

² Cic. *de Divin.* II. 23–50, who pours scorn on the legend: "estne quisquam ita insipiens qui credat exaratum esse, deum dicam an hominem?"

³ *Röm. Gesch.* (ed. 1853), pp. 62 ff.

⁴ But it is doubtful whether the Raetic dialect really is Etruscan: see J. Whatmough in *Class. Quart.* XVIII (1923), pp. 61–72, who argues that the Raeti were Indo-Europeans of mixed Celtic and Illyrian stock, the Etruscan elements in their language being due to the Etruscan domination in N. Italy.

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of Raetia and Etruria, and by the passage of Livy which asserts the Etruscan origin of the Raeti¹. This Raetian theory was accepted by Mommsen² as “not wholly improbable” on the grounds of the survival of the Etruscan dialect in the Alps, and of the similarity of the names “Raeti” and “Rasenna” (the name by which the Etruscans called themselves³); and though Mommsen dismissed the question of Etruscan origins as on a par with that of Hecuba’s mother—“neither capable of being known nor worth the knowing”—his authority gave the Raetian theory a considerable vogue. It was further supported on better grounds by the school of Helbig⁴ and Pigorini, who claimed that the Etruscans were “Italic,” not different in race from (e.g.) the Umbrians, and that these Italici were the people who lived in the “terremare” of North Italy, that in the early iron age they produced the civilization which takes its name from Villanova, and that later the same people produced under Aegean and Ionic influences the civilization known as Etruscan. It was especially maintained by this school that in certain places in Tuscany, such as Tarquinii, there was no break of continuity between the tombs of the Villanova and Etruscan types⁵, but on the contrary a clear development from the primitive well-tombs to trench-tombs and from these to corridor and chamber-tombs. The same con-

¹ Livy, v. 33. 11: “Alpinis quoque ea (sc. Etrusca) gentibus haud dubie origo est, maxime Raetis; quos loca ipsa efferarunt ne quid ex antiquo praeter sonum linguae nec eum incorruptum retinerent.”

² *History of Rome*, 1. pp. 154 ff.

³ Dionys. 1. 30.

⁴ Helbig, “Der Italiker in dem Poebene,” and “Sopra la provenienza degli Etruschi,” in *Annali dell’ Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, 1884, pp. 108 ff.

⁵ But cf. Falchi, *Vetulonia*, pp. 214–5, on the clear distinction there between the “Italic” well-tombs with hut urns or Villanova urns and local products only and the circle-tombs which contained scarabs, coloured glass and other foreign ornaments; he speaks there of a complete antagonism of civilization and customs between the two peoples.

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tinuity appears in some cemeteries of the Faliscan territory¹: the same furniture was found in the earliest trench-tombs as in the well-tombs (vases of rough black *impasto* sometimes with incised geometrical decoration, bronze fibulae and crescent-shaped razors), while the latest trench-tombs contained material of the "orientalizing" type found in early chamber-tombs (imitations in pottery of bronze supports for cauldrons, and decorative motives of lions, winged horses, sphinxes, lotuses, etc.).

Of late years there has been a clear reaction towards the Lydian theory². The arguments from the similarities of Asiatic and Etruscan culture have often been pointed out³, and need not be pressed here: it will be enough to mention the Etruscan love of music, jewelry⁴, bright colours, games, dancing and feasting, and in general their luxury as oriental rather than Italic in character. Their architecture and skill in metallurgy, their physiognomy and their dress find their closest parallels in Asia Minor. The Etruscan use of matronymics was foreign to the Italic peoples, but was customary among the Lycians⁵; their science of divination by the entrails of animals was almost

¹ The finds from the Ager Faliscus which are now to be seen in the Villa Giulia Museum shew this clearly.

² Brizio, "La provenienza degli Etruschi," in *Atti e Mem. della R. Deput. di Storia Patria per le provincie di Romagna*, 1885, pp. 120-237; Modestov in *Atti Congr. Stor.* 1903, II. pp. 23 ff. Cf. Kannengiesser in *Klio*, VIII (1908), pp. 252-62, who gives a survey of the position of the Etruscan question.

³ See especially Dennis, I. pp. xxxv ff.; Müller, I. pp. 81 ff.

⁴ The earliest Etruscan jewelry shews striking similarities to that of Lydia and of Ephesus and Rhodes, e.g. the oriental motive of the "Persian Artemis"—a goddess flanked by two lions—appears on the gold bracelets of Vetulonia; cf. Marshall, *Catalogue of Jewelry, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the British Museum*, pp. xxiv-xxvi; Karo in *Revue des études anciennes*, VII (1905), p. 196. Pausanias (VII. 6. 6) mentions a Lydian shrine of the Persian Artemis.

⁵ Hdt. I. 173; cf. Schrader's *Reallexikon der indogermanischen Altertumskunde* (2nd ed.), s.v. "Mutterrecht," "Namen."

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certainly derived from Chaldea¹; the extravagant gestures of grief common in Etruscan tombs (e.g. the Tomba del Morto at Tarquinii) suggest the emotional Asiatic, and are quite alien to the “gravitas” of the Latins. These facts have a strong cumulative effect; and it is hard to believe that the distinctive features of Etruscan civilization were entirely due to contact through trade with Phoenicians and Greeks, and to the acquisition in Tuscany of a rich soil and a subject population; that the Villanova and Etruscan civilizations are only different phases in the life of a single race which migrated from the Po valley across the Apennines². We must notice further several other points of resemblance between the Etruscans and the peoples of Asia Minor.

The “beehive” tombs of Etruria (such as the tomb from Casal Marittimo which has been reconstructed in the garden of the Florence Museum³, the Tomba Pietrera at Vetulonia, and others at Populonia and elsewhere) are of the same type as the “Treasury of Atreus” and other Mycenaean *θόλοι*; while the anthropoid cinerary urns of Chiusi recall the Egyptian Canopus-urns and the Mycenaean death-masks⁴. These similarities are striking, but neither is quite conclusive. A “beehive” tomb has been found at New Grange in Ireland⁵, and the type might therefore

¹ Cf. Ezekiel xxi. 21: “The king of Babylon...shook’ the arrows to and fro, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver”; Deecke in *Etruskische Forschungen und Studien*, iv. p. 79; G. Blecher, *De extispicio capita tria*, with Karl Bezold’s supplement (pp. 246–52) on Babylonian *extispicium*.

² So De Sanctis maintains (*Storia dei Romani*, i. pp. 124 ff. and esp. 143 ff.).

³ Milani, *Il R. Museo Archeologico di Firenze*, p. 286, tav. CXXIV. Montelius, *Civilisation Primitive*, II. pl. 166, illustrates a similar tomb.

⁴ Milani, *Italici ed Etruschi*, p. 9. In the Civic Museum at Chiusi there are some bronze masks originally attached to cinerary urns, a closer parallel still to the Mycenaean death-masks. See Montelius, *op. cit.* II. pls. 220–3.

⁵ S. Müller, *Urgeschichte Europas*, pp. 74–5.

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be regarded as characteristic of the Bronze Age rather than of Mycenaean culture in particular; and anthropoid urns appear from eastern Germany as well as from Etruria and the East¹.

It has further been maintained by Patroni² that the characteristic Pompeian house, with its atrium and rectangular rooms, was introduced by the Etruscans from the eastern Mediterranean. The Pompeian house, he thinks, was not derived directly from the Greeks of historical times, but resembles rather the Homeric house with its *μέγαρον* (tablinum) and *αὐλή* (atrium) and (on a smaller scale) the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces. But I do not agree with Patroni that the atrium could not have developed out of the round thatched hut which is characteristic of the Italic peoples of north and central Italy. The atrium is reproduced in the form of some Etruscan tombs (e.g. Tomba dei Pilastrini at Cerveteri) and in a funeral urn from Poggio Gaiella near Chiusi, now in the Florence Museum³. These shew the "displuviate" type (Vitruv. vi. 3), which may easily have developed from the hut with a smoke-hole in the roof. The next step would be to make the roof slope inwards instead of outwards (so that the rainwater should not run off on to the outer walls), and so we get the "Tuscan" atrium, which may really be an Etruscan invention, as it is not known outside Italy. The tetrastyle and Corinthian forms would represent later stages of development due to an increase in the size of the atrium.

Thus Patroni's theory cannot be regarded as proved, though it is not impossible; he accounts for the difference between the open *αὐλή* and the nearly closed atrium by

¹ J. Schlemm, *Wörterbuch zur Vorgeschichte*, pp. 173-5, s.v. "Gcsichtsurnen," describes and illustrates anthropoid urns from Pomerania, Posen and Silesia.

² "L'Origine della Domus" in *Rend. Linc.* 1902, pp. 467 ff.

³ Martha, *L'Art Étrusque*, p. 290; Durm, *Baukunst der Etrusker*, pp. 22-3.

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the difference between the mean temperatures of (e.g.) Tiryns and Pompeii, and supposes that the atrium developed in the reverse direction, from the Corinthian to the Tuscan type¹.

Milani in his *Italici ed Etruschi* and elsewhere appears to have gone much further than the facts warrant in seeking to prove a connexion between the Etruscans and the "Minoans" of Crete. There is no evidence that either the round stone "shields" which covered some of the Vetulonian well-tombs, or the small figures with crested helmet, round shield and drumstick which were found at Vetulonia² are derived from Crete—the characteristic shape of the Minoan shield appears to have been a figure of eight³—while the ivory arms from Praeneste, now in the Villa Giulia Museum, which Milani regards as symbolical and akin to the long trident rods which appear on a vase of Hagia Triada, are probably simply handles for fans. Nor, with the exception of the double axe, is there anything Cretan in the archaic Vetulonian stele of Aules Pheluskes⁴; the warrior's round shield and crested helmet recall far more closely the figures on Corinthian vases.

The double axe itself which appears so often in Minoan art is found also in Hittite sculpture⁵, and there are many other similarities in the monuments of the Etruscans and of the Hittites. In particular we may note as common to both the high caps, and shoes with upturned toes; the curved rods and folding chairs; the hunting scenes and

¹ *Rend. Linc.* 1902, p. 503; 1903, p. 384.

² *Italici ed Etruschi*, pp. 12-13.

³ Burrows, *The Discoveries in Crete*, p. 182; Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, p. 312, says that "on no monument of the true Mycenaean Age is a circular shield to be seen."

⁴ *Not. scav.* 1895, p. 26; Montelius, *Civilisation primitive en Italie*, II. pl. 189. 11. Cf. Karo in *Ath. Mitt.* xxxiii. 1908.

⁵ Garstang, *Land of the Hittites*, p. 288 and pl. LXXVII. 2; Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, I. 2, § 479.