THE ETRUSCANS

LOST CIVILIZATIONS

LUCY SHIPLEY

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– Anthony Tuck, Director, Poggio Civitate Excavations and Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

HISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY

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The books in this series explore the rise and fall of the great civilizations and peoples of the ancient world. Each book considers not only their history but their art, culture and lasting legacy and asks why they remain important and relevant in our world today.

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3300	Ötzi 'the Iceman' dies and is preserved in the Italian Alps
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1100–900	Proto-Villanovan cultures; development of biconical urn burial; hilltop fortified settlements
900–700	Villanovan period. Increased social stratification; increasing evidence for trade with both northern Europe and Greece and the Near East. Gradual adoption of inhumation burial
700	First Etruscan alphabet, the Marsiliana Tablet, made
675	Characteristically Etruscan black burnished bucchero pottery produced at Caere
675–50	Construction of first major structures (with tiled roofing systems) at Poggio Civitate

635	Adoption of black-figure vase painting technique in Athens after its invention in Corinth
625–550	Objects from the Isis tomb variously made and deposited
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500	Gradual onset of economic recession in maritime centres of southern Etruria
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400	Migration southward of northern Celtic groups reduces Etruscan influence in northern Italy; they go on to sack Rome in 390

396	Siege of Veii, traditionally seen as the ending point for Etruscan political dominance
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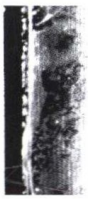
456	Bishop of Tarquinia referred to; Christianity has won
1296	First historical reports of Etruscan artefacts uncovered during defensive works at Arezzo
1435	Cosimo de' Medici comes to power in Florence
1513–21	Papacy of Leo X, son of Lorenzo 'il Magnifico' de Medici
1723	Thomas Dempster's *De Etruria Regali* republished by Thomas Coke
1726	Foundation of the Accademia Etrusca at Cortona

c. 1760–1820	'Etruscheria' or 'Etruscomania' sweeps Europe
1763	J. J. Winckelmann exposes 'Etruscan Vases' as Greek
1776	Foundation of the Museo Guarnacci at Volterra, the first public Etruscan museum
1796	Napoleon Bonaparte takes control of Italy; later his brother Lucien commences his archaeological investigations in Tuscany
1848	George Dennis presents his Etruscan adventures to an adoring public
1864	Garibaldi's March on Rome marks the beginnings of the modern Italian nation state
1867	The mummy wrapped in the Liber Linteus ends her travels in Zagreb
1922	Mussolini takes power in Italy; medieval city of Corneto renamed 'Tarquinia'
1927	D. H. Lawrence explores Tuscany; *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is published in Florence a year later
1939	Massimo Pallottino queries Herodotus; puts forward theory of indigenous Etruscan origins
1944	Division of Italy during last days of the Second World War; massacre at Marzabotto

1953	Discovery of DNA, later to become a major weapon in the fight over Etruscan origins
1964	Discovery of the Pyrgi Tablets
1985	First 'Anno degli Etruschi' celebration, repeated in 2015
2003	Discovery of the Tomb of the Infernal Chariot, Sarteano
2008	Financial crisis strikes; Italian banks with medieval pedigree begin to topple; funding for archaeology and heritage in Italy under threat
2016	First female ruler of Rome since Tullia, Virginia Raggi, elected



PROLOGUE

Lost civilizations. The phrase conjures up visions of Indiana Jones barrelling across the desert and intrepid Victorian explorers fighting through thick jungle. These square-jawed heroes are searching for a city lost in the forest, or hidden beneath the sands – the archetype of a lost civilization. To be fair, there are places in the world where this heady mix of derring-do and archaeology come together. The iconic temples of Angkor, swathed in steamy rainforest; the first sight of Machu Picchu, high in the Andes. The nineteenth-century accounts of these discoveries are the stuff of legend. Yet it's a legend with major issues. In both these cases, Western explorers encountered a place that local people already knew all about. The very phrase 'lost civilization' is a denigration: modern descendants cannot possibly have any connection to those who once built these great monuments. The phrase implies that the living Khmer, or the indigenous people of the Andes, have nothing to do with their ancestors and can as such be treated poorly by colonists. A 'lost civilization' has to have become lost, actively forgotten by unworthy descendants. It can then be 'found' by archaeologists, exposed with their trowels, its treasures shipped off to museums, the lives of its people discussed in erudite journals. Yet the mystique remains, ensuring a separation between the living and the dead, keeping alive the dream of a better age, a knowledge that has been forgotten, a link that has been severed.

Etruscan musician from the Tomb of the Triclinium, Tarquinia.

At the other end of the scale of archaeological fantasy from a 'lost civilization' is the idea of a people who were 'just like us'. When textual sources survive and can be easily read, we can read the words of people long dead, busily occupied by their daily lives. Letters to friends or pleas for supplies, invitations to parties or admonitions to unruly children: these documents serve to underline the familiar. Texts, too, enable modern communities to claim shared values with ancient communities, to proudly proclaim allegiance to philosophies and concepts defined by thinkers and politicians who died thousands of years ago. The classic examples here are of ancient Greek and Roman culture, the acclaimed origin points for European political systems, legal rights, engineering ambition and much more. We do not talk about these civilizations as being lost, as they are still with us. The mixture of familiar activities and lofty ideals put forward in these texts results in recognition and acclamation: these people were just like us, they were just like who we want to be. Their darker elements are shuffled to one side: these are past people who we know, or we think we know.

These are two extreme kinds of reaction to the peoples of the past. Recognition and alienation; pull close and push away. Yet in between these extremes lie more complex and subtle emotional responses, to societies that are neither beguilingly familiar nor iconic survivors. They can be co-opted into the modern world, or conveniently mythologized and pushed to one side, dragged to one end of the scale or the other depending on what we want from them. Much of European prehistory falls into this strange abyss, with names from classical literature squished on to once-living groups, brought back to support this or that idea or a particular kind of nationalism. Myths cling to particular ancient communities, derived partly from mud flung in Athens or Rome, partly from Renaissance imaginations, partly from nineteenth-century rediscovery. This world before text can be remade in the image of the modern world, with evidence interpreted to suit the present day. These myths are tenacious, and can have the effect of pushing an ancient society to one end of the scale or the other, towards colonial ideologies of lost civilization or utopian visions of familiarity.