

THE ETRUSCANS

HISTORY AND ARTIFACTS

TARQUINII
CLUSIUM

BY MADISON POON

BRIEF HISTORY

WHO

WERE THE ETRUSCANS?

- ancient Romans called the people of the country *Etrusci* or *Tusci*, from which is derived the name of the modern Italian region of **Tuscany** (Toscana)
- Greeks and Romans saw them as an **immoral race** of people, pagan pirates
- two **theories** of Etruscan origin:
 - o originated from Lydia, an ancient country in western Asia minor (Herodotus)
 - o autochthonous, an indigenous Italian race
- **first theory** most accepted:
 - o excavations containing articles from different regions (amber, silver, gold, Egyptian gemwork)
 - o character of art and distinctive characteristics of religion

WHEN

DID THEY EXIST?

- before the rise of the Roman civilization, during 1st millennium BC
- Probably **originate** from Asia minor around 800 BC, existing through *Iron Age*, *Villanovian Period*, the *Orientalizing Period* (between the end of the 8th Century until the late 7th Century BCE. It is so called because of the eastern influence in art and artifacts), through to the 3rd century B.C.
- first permanent **settlements**, *Vetulonia* and *Tarquinia*, date to end of 9th century BC
- achieved the **peak** of their military and commercial **strength** around the middle of the 6th century
- city of **Veii defeated** in 396 by Rome, which marked beginning of Rome's **gradual conquest** of Etruria, completed 283 BC

BRIEF HISTORY

WHERE

DID THEY LIVE?

- live in Etruria on the northwest coast of Italy
- controlled most of northern and central Italy from Targuinii (Tarquinia), Caere (Cerveteri), Veii, Perugia (Perugia) and Volsinii (Orvieto)
- Greece controlled the Southern part of Italy within the same time period

WHAT

WERE THEY?

- ancient civilization with distinct language, religion
- aristocratic ruling, divided into a confederacy of 12 cities
- autonomous, never united to form a state
- using Greek colonial cities as a model, shifted from village life to an urban civilization
- built aqueducts, bridges and sewers
- Art had obvious influences on renaissance artists such as Michelangelo
- most present day knowledge comes from cinerary urns and tomb chambers



ARCHITECTURE & ART

ARCHITECTURE

- nothing remains of Etruscan palaces, public buildings and early temples, all built of wood and brick
- most cities were laid out in quadrangle, with fortifications and walls enforced by double gates and towers
- shares general characteristics, but is clearly differentiated from one city to the next, reflecting the political independence of each

ART

- art reveals its relation to Greeks, Egypt and Asia Minor, while reflecting Italian elements and distinctively Etruscan religious beliefs



- **Chimera**, Arezzo 5th-4th century BC
 - o a fire-breathing female monster resembling a lion in the forepart, a goat in the middle, a dragon behind, with a serpent's tail
 - o illustrates Asian roots, representing demons as animal hybrids
 - o references the Sphinxes of Egypt

- rise and fall from power is reflected in a gradual change from optimism to pessimism and in the choice of ever-more morbid and bloodthirsty subjects as their political fortunes declined
- influence on Romans was supreme from 6th century BC until the ascendancy of Greek styles in 3rd century BC



SCULPTURE

- preferred using both clay and bronze
- forms were molded rather than carved
- worked in bronze, made chariots, bowls, candelabra, cylindrical coffers and polished mirrors, all engraved with mythological motifs
- crafted fine gold, silver, and ivory jewelry, using filigree and granulation

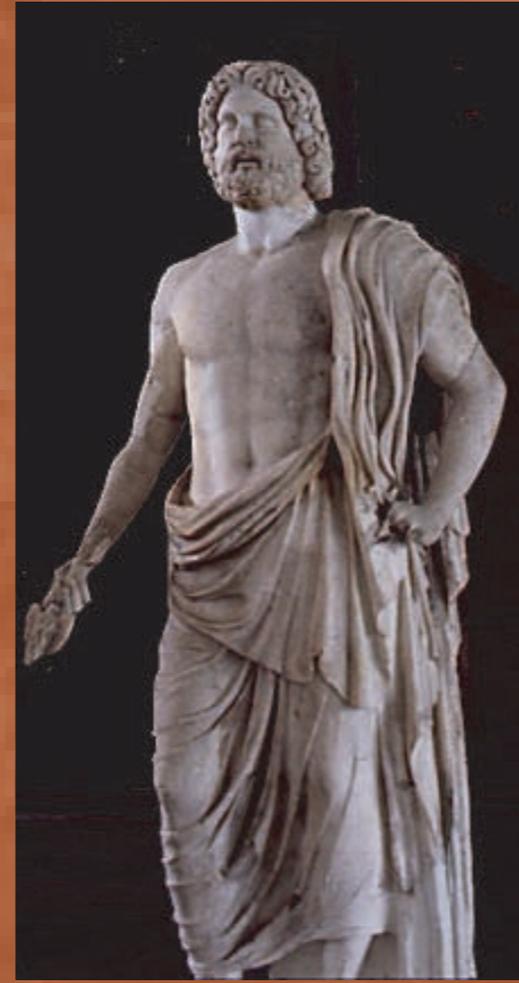


MARS FROM TODI

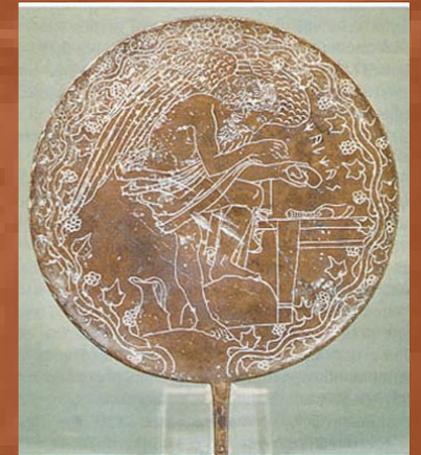


APOLLO

Statues exemplify Etruscan interpretation of the Greek classical style, while the energetic stance and stylized textures are characteristic of the Etruscans.



JUPITER



engraved back of mirror,
Vatican Museums, Rome
400 BC

- priest in Homer's *Illiad*,
divining from a liver

URNS



CINERARY HUT URNS

- underlying belief, similar to the Egyptians, that a part of the soul remained with the body or at least that the body was important for the afterlife
- earliest grave sites were cremations, with the ash being retained either in biconical urns, or urns fashioned to represent huts



BICONICAL URN (FEMALE)



BICONICAL URN (MALE)



CANOPIC URN

TOMBS

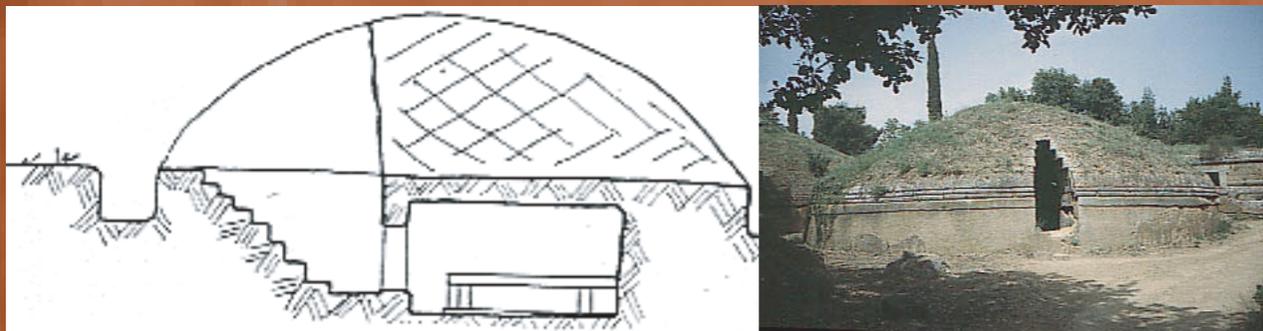
- Gradually **inhumation** burials began to appear
- **Necropolis:** “*City of the Dead*” A cemetery, especially a large and elaborate one belonging to an ancient city

- First tombs found in *Tarquinia* and *Caere*, and during the Orientalizing period, eventually becoming the prevailing rite

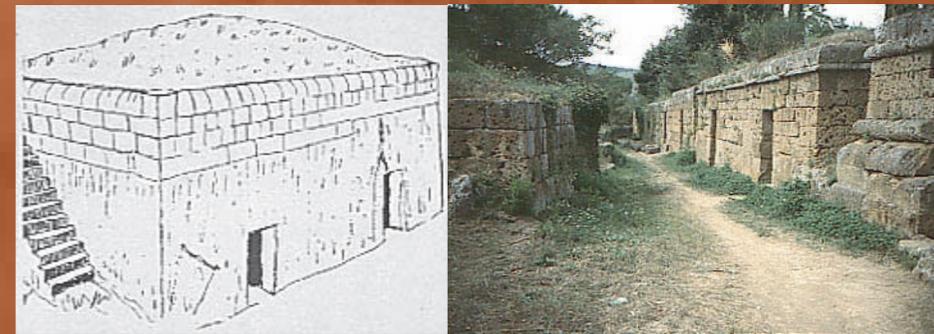
- excludes northern Etruria, where cremation persisted right up to the 1st century BC, epitomised by the elaborately carved alabaster urns of Volterra

- The tombs excavated completely underground, generally in hillsides, are defined as "hypogeal" tombs, whilst those excavated in flat land and covered by soil and gravel are known as "tumuli"

- mid 6th century BC and throughout the 5th century BC, new tombs were called "cubes" and were built side by side in rows, forming real cities of the dead with streets and squares. Inside the tombs there were only two chambers, and outside there were lateral steps leading to the top of the cube where there were altars for worship



TUMULUS TOMB



CUBE TOMBS

MURALS

- surviving painting consists chiefly of murals on the stone or plastered walls and ceilings of tombs
- subjects from Etruscan religion, or themes of everyday life, as well as from Greek literature



- Most murals are lively depiction of games, dancing, music and banqueting that accompanied Etruscan funerals

- murals of early period (6th-5th century BC):
 - o drawing strong, colours bright and flat
 - o figures stylized, heavy and often outlined in black

Wrestlers, Tomb of the Monkey, Chiusi, 480 B.C.

- More funeral games are displayed here in celebration of the dead hero



National Archaeological Museum

- canopic urn
 - terracotta head for a lid (portrait likeness to deceased)
- urn set in bronze model of a chair

Etruscan Necropolis

- the Tomb of the Lion
- the Tomb of the Pilgrim

- Tomb of the Monkey
 - Chamber tomb, 480-470 BC*
 - Woman participating in athletic competition, spectators, jugglers, dancers
 - Artwork not as well executed as those in Tarquinia



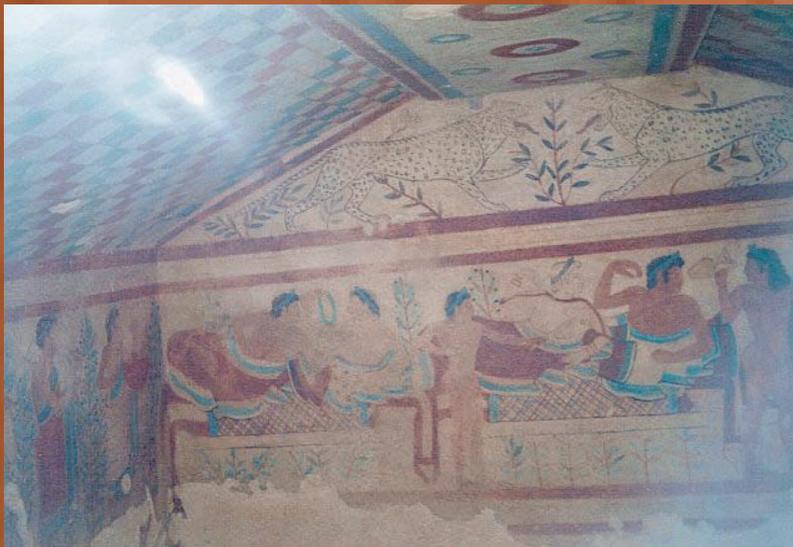
TARQUINII

MODERN DAY TARQUINIA

- one of the first permanent settlements of the Etruscans

The Necropolis of Monterozzi

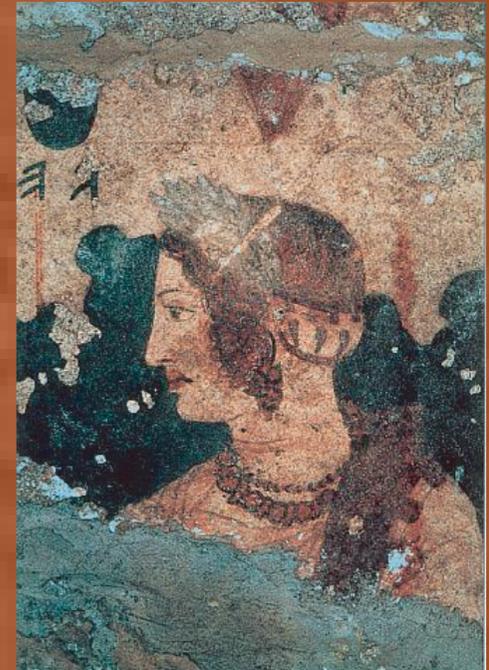
- more than one hundred and fifty painted tombs are known, but only a small number of these can be visited
- In the first phase of the history of Tarquinia, the tombs are mainly of the tumulus or sarcophagus type, that is, covered with slabs of limestone.
- The period of frescoed tombs began in the second half of the 6th century BC, with the economic development.
 - have a corridor of access with steps carved in the side of the hill, leading to a large rectangular chamber (which reproduced the rooms of domestic architecture), where the bodies of the dead were placed.



Tomb of the Leopards,
Tarquinia, 5th century B.C.
- decorated in the manner favoured in Tarquinii
- banquet scene opposite entrance, groups of dancers and musicians on the side

Tomb of the Orus, *Tarquinia,* mid 4th century B.C.

- Velia, a noble Etruscan woman stares into the darkness with a somber yet disdainful look, almost sneering at death
- Marks contrast in mood of relaxed confidence of earlier tombs
- reflects gloom of Etruscan decline



CONCLUSION

Etruscan civilization is important to the Western world, as it laid the foundation to the area, both physically and intellectually, while introducing Eastern ideas and practices to the Western world.

“In the ancient suburbs of the Appennines there remained the descendants of the Etruscans and the wonder contained in the tombs of their ancestors woke up again their native genome: the central part of the ancient world earth of the Etruscans, Tuscany, became the cradle of the Humanism and of the Renaissance. In these cities, for long generations Etruscan, characters such as Dante Leonardo, Brunelleschi, Giotto, Bernini, Michelangelo etc were born, and above all so many unknown artisans and artists to which the growth of our Western civilization is owed.”

- Grazziano Baccolini