

Reviews

I. HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

R. MASSARELLI, *I TESTI ETRUSCHI SU PIOMBO* (Biblioteca di studi etruschi 53). Pisa/Rome: Fabrizio Serra editore, 2014. Pp. 320, illus. ISBN 9788862275712. €585.00.

In 1991, Helmut Rix and others produced the first full corpus of the ten thousand or so surviving Etruscan texts in a two-volume *editio minor*, including comprehensive indexes. The ability to find all instances of words sharing the same initial or final sequence of letters easily and quickly gave fresh life to the ‘combinatorial’ approach for deciphering the language. Scholars using this method attempt to find a meaning that will fit all instances of a word or related word-forms. Bilingual texts, including the famous Pyrgi Tablets, give the meanings of some Etruscan words, and others can be inferred from parallels from ancient texts in other languages, but it is the combinatorial method that has allowed the greatest progress in the interpretation of Etruscan texts. Since Rix’s *Etruskische Texte*, there has been a growing scholarly consensus about the fundamentals of grammar, the meanings of a number of words and the functions of most of the texts. Alongside the manuals and expositions of Etruscan grammar, there is now a growing number of commentaries on the longer surviving documents, notably M. Cristofani, *Tabula Capuana* (1995); C. Facchetti, *Frammenti di diritto privato etrusco* (2000); L. Agostiniani and F. Nicosia, *Tabula cortonensis* (2000); and L. B. van der Meer, *Liber linteus zagrebiensis* (2007). Riccardo Massarelli’s work on the diverse Etruscan texts on lead, the result of a doctorate at the University of Perugia, belongs with the best of these, giving guidance through some of the suggested interpretations, while refusing to jump too quickly to a single conclusion.

The bulk of the work is taken up with detailed analysis and discussion of two of the most puzzling Etruscan documents to have been discovered. The *piombo di Magliano* is a roughly circular lead tablet, c. 8 cm in diameter, inscribed on both sides with text running in a spiral from the outside edge inwards. Divine names and verbal echoes of the Zagreb Linen book (now known to be a ritual calendar) encourage the view that the object has some religious purpose. M. is illuminating on structural parallels in the text, and has useful discussions on, for example, Etruscan relative clauses, but he wisely does not attempt a closer interpretation. Even more baffling is the so-called *lamina di Santa Marinella*, actually two fragmentary pieces of a larger text unearthed near Cerveteri in 1966. Torelli thought the *lamina* recorded a prophecy, Pallottino a ritual, and Pfiffig wrote a book around the theory that it was an *ex voto*, recording the offerings made by a woman to an (otherwise unknown) goddess *Lanchumita*, after her prayers for a child were answered. Among its many oddities, the most striking is the occurrence of two unparalleled signs, each repeated three times at the beginning of the first fragment. The first of these signs looks exactly like the Linear B sign used to denote the number 10,000 (a fact unmentioned by M., although he attributes the value of 10,000 or 1,000 to the symbol). After detailed discussion, M. comes to the tentative conclusion that it is most likely an oracular text, with its closest parallel the lead tablets from Dodona in Greece.

The remaining three chapters are likely to be more rewarding to the reader who is not so interested in the intricacies of scholarly guesswork on the meaning of Etruscan vocabulary and its grammatical system. The first of these deals with *defixiones*, of which there are fewer than ten surviving Etruscan examples. The two longest surviving curses, however, should be of considerable interest to many classicists. One, from Volterra, consists of a partly overlapping list of names written by two separate hands, with perhaps a third adding after one name *canis* (which some have taken to be the Latin word ‘dog’). The other, from Monte Pitti, appears to have something corresponding to Greek and Roman curse formulae, and may contain the name of its author, who identifies herself as a freed slave. M. gives a very good account of the structure of this text, while remaining largely agnostic about the meaning of individual words. (As an example of the state of Etruscan decipherment, it might be worth noting the various suggested translations of the phrase *ces zeriś* on 208: *horum sacrorum* (Torp); *horum omnium* (Vetter); *his sacris* (Trombetti); ‘di queste persone’ (Meriggi); ‘bei / mit / von diesen Freien’ (Steinbauer); ‘secondo questo rito’ (Facchetti).)

The final two short chapters cover commercial documents and other minor lead objects, including *glandes*, respectively. There is a useful discussion of the lead tablet from Pech Maho in Southern France, with Greek on one side and an apparently unconnected Etruscan document on the back, in which the word *mataliai* may possibly be the locative of the Etruscan name for Marseille, although it is not clear why it has medial *t*. The twenty-seven inscribed sling-shots mostly elude interpretation, but our guesses about the meaning of *vraθ* or *asθ* are probably no worse than those a Roman legionary might make.

The prohibitive price of this beautifully produced and illustrated book means that it will find its way into only a few libraries and I doubt anyone will purchase it for their own use at full price. It is with reluctance that I pass my review copy back to the Joint Library.

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E. BLAKE, *SOCIAL NETWORKS AND REGIONAL IDENTITY IN BRONZE AGE ITALY*.

New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xiv + 325, illus., maps. ISBN 9781107063204. £65.00/US\$99.00.

This well organized and highly readable book on the detection of social networks and regional identity on the basis of archaeological sources is interesting for a broader audience than scholars interested in the Italian Bronze Age alone. In this sense, its title is slightly misleading. While it suggests that the aim of the book is to reveal social networks and regional identity in Bronze Age Italy (which it does), their identification in reality serves — and quite surprisingly — a historical goal: namely, to formulate hypotheses on the formation of the ancient peoples of ancient Italy prior to the Roman conquest (ch. 1). However, one can also read the book as a sophisticated exercise in social network analysis using an important but difficult dataset. At the heart of the book is the issue of identity and ethnicity of Italy's Iron Age populations. Indeed the reader, right from the beginning, is invited to think along with the author to evaluate her idea that it might well be that Late Bronze Age regional social exchange networks were the precursors of the Veneti, Etruscans and Latins in north and central Italy, the Oenotrians and Messapians in the south, and other historically known peoples that we know to have been living scattered across peninsular Italy in the pre-Roman period.

This is a very challenging hypothesis, and the author puts it to the test using formal computerized network analysis. Let us start with a brief look at the central premises and methodology of the book, such as can be distilled from ch. 3. Departing from the concept of path dependence, which postulates that a trajectory once set in (in this case during the Late Bronze Age) will influence future developments (even though past circumstances may no longer be relevant), the author hypothesizes that Bronze Age networks in Italy may have been at the basis of the geographical disposition of Italy's ancient peoples and identity formation. By mapping Late Bronze Age networks onto the historical regional/ethnic territories, as postulated by classical scholarship for pre-conquest Italy, the author expects to reveal a path dependent continuity. Where this does not occur, this requires explanation in terms of specific causes for the perceived discontinuity.

Such patterning can be formally analysed, as Blake does, using computerized social network analysis (SNA). In ch. 2, B. discusses the categories of objects that she adopts in her network analysis: forty object types for the Recent Bronze Age (RBA) and twenty-six for the Final Bronze Age (FBA), all extensively studied and published by specialists. Applying SNA, in ch. 4 the first step in the analysis is to construct networks on the basis of the findspots of the chosen classes of objects for the RBA and FBA respectively. In carrying out the peninsular-wide analysis, B. works with a reduced matrix of findspots from which she removes hoards, ritual deposits and casual or unknown find contexts. This she does in order to reveal the impact of long-distance activities on regions, rather than to analyse regional activities between nodes in the networks, which is her second step in the analysis. In her initial peninsula-wide analysis, sites with shared objects must therefore not be further than 50 km apart from each other to qualify as being connected (a two-day walk or manageable day's sail) (89). The analyses reveal that during the RBA the Po-Apennine subgroup (correlating with the famous Palafitte/Terramare culture) stands out as a major northern regional network, with a much smaller but distinct subgroup in Lombardy