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## Review of Simon K. F. Stoddard, Historical Dictionary of the Etruscans

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***Historical Dictionary of the Etruscans.*** By SIMON K. F. STODDART. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2009. (Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations, No. 24.) Pp. xix, 320, 23 Figures, and 3 Maps. ISBN: 978-0-8108-5471-0. \$84.00.

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The study of Etruscan civilization has always proved difficult to pigeonhole into a specific academic discipline. This is as much a result of the variety of challenges facing the student of this subject, as it is the evolution of the academy in the twentieth century. To this end three distinctive schools can be recognised in contemporary Etruscan studies, although of course others may be added, and undoubtedly many scholars would be aghast at being categorised into one or another. First, Etruscology has largely been dominated by classicists who have sought to have the Etruscans studied as a critical constituent of the ancient Mediterranean world. However, there have been limitations with certain aspects of this approach, one of these has been the over reliance on Greco-Roman literary sources in attempting to construct a historical narrative for pre-Roman Italy, with notable scholars explaining archaeological phenomena through the actions of figures such as Demaratus and the early Roman kings (e.g., Winter 2009: esp. 578-581; Carandini 2007). As has been stated innumerable times by others such conclusions are speculative, at best. Instead, the placement of the Etruscans as a part of the classical world should be done in a manner similar to that in Smith 2011 where sources and myths are constructed and deconstructed in light of the archaeological evidence, and not the other way around.

In a similar way the art historical school has advanced the understanding of Etruscan civilization immensely. However often generalised conclusions have been made based upon the analysis of a single image. A need exists to analyse objects contextually, as it is only when they form part of a credible dataset that anything meaningful can be determined. Moreover the exceptional scenes that decorate vases and tomb-paintings, while fascinating in their own right, are that very thing, exceptional, and not necessarily representative of broader cultural trends. The third school of modern Etruscan studies has been an approach grounded in post-processual archaeology and anthropological theory. It has been especially championed by scholars associated with the recent 'British' tradition of Etruscology, although its reverberations can be discerned in the scholarship emerging elsewhere in Europe and the United States. The work of Vedia Izzet, Corinna Riva, Roman Roth, amongst others, forms the locus of this new classification. It is to this latter group that the volume under review here belongs and it is worth noting that its author, Simon Stoddart, was amongst the first to start approaching the Etruscans with clear theoretical and methodological frameworks.

Stoddart's volume is the latest addition to a series of 'historical dictionaries of ancient civilizations'. It is not the first reference book on the Etruscans, however it is

the first English language 'dictionary' of the Etruscans. Indeed it is the first in this genre in any language since Cristofani's *Dizionario illustrato della civiltà Etrusca* in 1985. Since then the understanding of Etruscan civilisation has advanced considerably, through ongoing and new field projects, and through the increasing incorporation of archaeological science in analysing material remains. These, and other discoveries, more than merit a new dictionary of the Etruscans and there is much to celebrate in its publication. The section before the dictionary proper includes a selection of useful and relevant maps. A chronological table begins with an entry for the Early Bronze Age and finishes with an entry for 248 BC and the destruction of Falerii Veteres. It also includes a number of 'historical' events such as battles and the foundations of certain city-states. Perhaps the most controversial and simultaneously constructive aspect of this volume is its introduction. It, in essence, provides a brief *state of the field* with respect to the understanding of various aspects of Etruscan culture and society. The sections on geography and chronology are concise and informative, and the latter takes into account the latest dendrochronological dates from the eastern Mediterranean and central Europe. As with the preceding chronological table, and in keeping with the archaeological tradition to which this volume belongs, Stoddart argues that the development of Etruscan culture should be traced back to circa 1700 BC, and he carefully distinguishes this from evidence for state formation in the seventh century – a time when a historical group that can be securely identified as Etruscan emerges in central Italy. The various sections on aspects of identity in the Etruscan world are refreshing, particularly the distinctions made between the body, family and descent group and the broader community. A brief, but often overlooked section highlighting the geographical features of Etruria is also included. Even a brief glance through the introduction will tell its reader that Stoddart's analysis is based in an anthropological approach that favours the primacy of archaeological evidence. This is encapsulated in his employment of the term 'descent group' as opposed to groups based on kinship, i.e. the typical vernacular of classicists. Distinctions such as this, while perhaps to some trivial, set the tone for the rest of the volume and firmly place this dictionary in the archaeological school of Etruscology.

The dictionary itself contains entries on all of the major sites and most minor ones that have been published in some form. Entries also exist on language, classes of material culture and other broader social and cultural themes. At the end of each entry cross-references are provided to other related entries or where they are mentioned within the text cross-references are highlighted in bold font. One of the subjects that this reviewer enjoyed most was the inclusion of entries for notable scholars, and other figures, that have in some form or other contributed to the development Etruscan studies, which results in a concise history of the development of the discipline. The only shortcoming for the individual entries is not one that is the fault of the author, but of the series in question, and that is the exclusion of a short bibliography for each entry. A suggestion for the entire series, including a

revised edition of this volume, would be to include a list of the most relevant works below each subject in a manner similar to that in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. However, it must be noted that a detailed thematic bibliography is included. Another interesting and extremely useful feature is an appendix of museums and institutions relevant to Etruscan studies, similar in conception to the equally helpful, but now outdated guide in Barker and Rasmussen (1998). This is further divided into a list of museums and institutions by country. Included in this are known websites associated with museums and it is pleasing to note the considerable number of Italian museums that are now embracing internet technology to display their wares in an electronic format.

Overall, this new dictionary of Etruscan civilization more than meets its objectives. It has much to offer students and scholars alike and should prove to be an invaluable reference tool worthy of a place on the shelves of university libraries and in the collections of those with an interest in the ancient world. For the interested layman it has much to offer too; the combination of introduction, museum appendix, and dictionary could prove a very helpful and informative guide for anyone undertaking a historical tour of Tuscany.

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