

Kluwer Mediation Blog

How Mediation Helped Resolved Two Thousand Years Old Mystery...

Martin Svatoš (FORARB/Charles University) · Sunday, March 22nd, 2015



There is by far no other nation that would contribute to European civilisation with such an enormous portion and that would be so easily forgotten as the Etruscans. According to some authors, their influence to nowadays' Europe culture is at least comparable to that one of Romans or Greeks. And yet, how many people enjoying a glass of famous Italian wine Chianti know that the first grape wines in the area of Tuscany were planted by Etruscans some two and half thousands years ago? Or do you ever ponder where did the Adriatic Sea take its name from? Only few know that its origin is related to the ancient city of *Hadria* and that it is related to Etruscan denomination of blue colour. Or how many tourists have ever wondered when sitting at Piazza Navona and drinking their cup of coffee or just walking through the narrow streets of Rome, who helped to found that city and who boosted it from the village to the modern city? Despite the omnipresence of Etruscan in Europe, to the modern society they are almost unknown.

Influence of Forgotten Nation

The proud nation that had prognosticated its own doom has been forgotten despite the fact that it once governed over the Apennine peninsula, dominated the western Mediterranean Sea and made a business with northern countries such as Rhineland. Well, it is up to modern archaeologists to rediscover the heritage of nation that for the first time in our history connected east and west and created the milieu for the further development of business and cultural exchange in Europe.

Any such effort is an extremely complicated job because all the memories and proofs of once splendid civilization were covered by sand and dust after the conquest of Etruria by Rome – the very city the Etruscan once founded and helped to raise. Romans, originally governed by Etruscans tried to eliminate all the remarks of this ancient civilisation after having been casted free from their yoke. Thus any important rediscovery in this field is extremely appreciated. By coincidence, it was mediation what witnessed one of the most fabulous disclosures in the history of Etruscology.

Mediation helping to break the secret

Etruscans had never created a united empire with only one capital. They were rather organized in kind of confederation of twelve powerful and independent centres that shared the culture, language and religion. However, location of only eleven of them was known to the archaeologists in the 19th century. Some of them, such as Rome or Perugia, have been blooming cities; the others have survived as ruins. Yet the location of the last one, once powerful and important Vetulonia, was still unknown in 1881 when the local medicine and Councillor Isidoro Falchi living in small Tuscany town Campilia Maritima made his splendid discovery.

Apart of his official functions, Isidoro was also a passionate and self-taught archaeologist who was persuaded that the location of Vetulonia had to be placed somewhere close to his home town. Nevertheless, this was just his belief that was supported by no concrete proof...until the stroke of luck helped. And this stroke was kicked off by mediation.

One afternoon, Isidoro Falchi was fulfilling his councillor's duties. He was acting as mediator in a typical neighbourhood dispute of two farmers that quarrelled on unclear boundaries between their two plots of lands. As a true skilled mediator, Isidoro ordered a visit to the disputed land. The parties arrived in the fields outside the town and presented their positions. Then some study of maps was accomplished. Isidoro tried to mark the disputed boundaries with his heel. While the two parties were arguing on, he was studying the line in the soil he just had made.

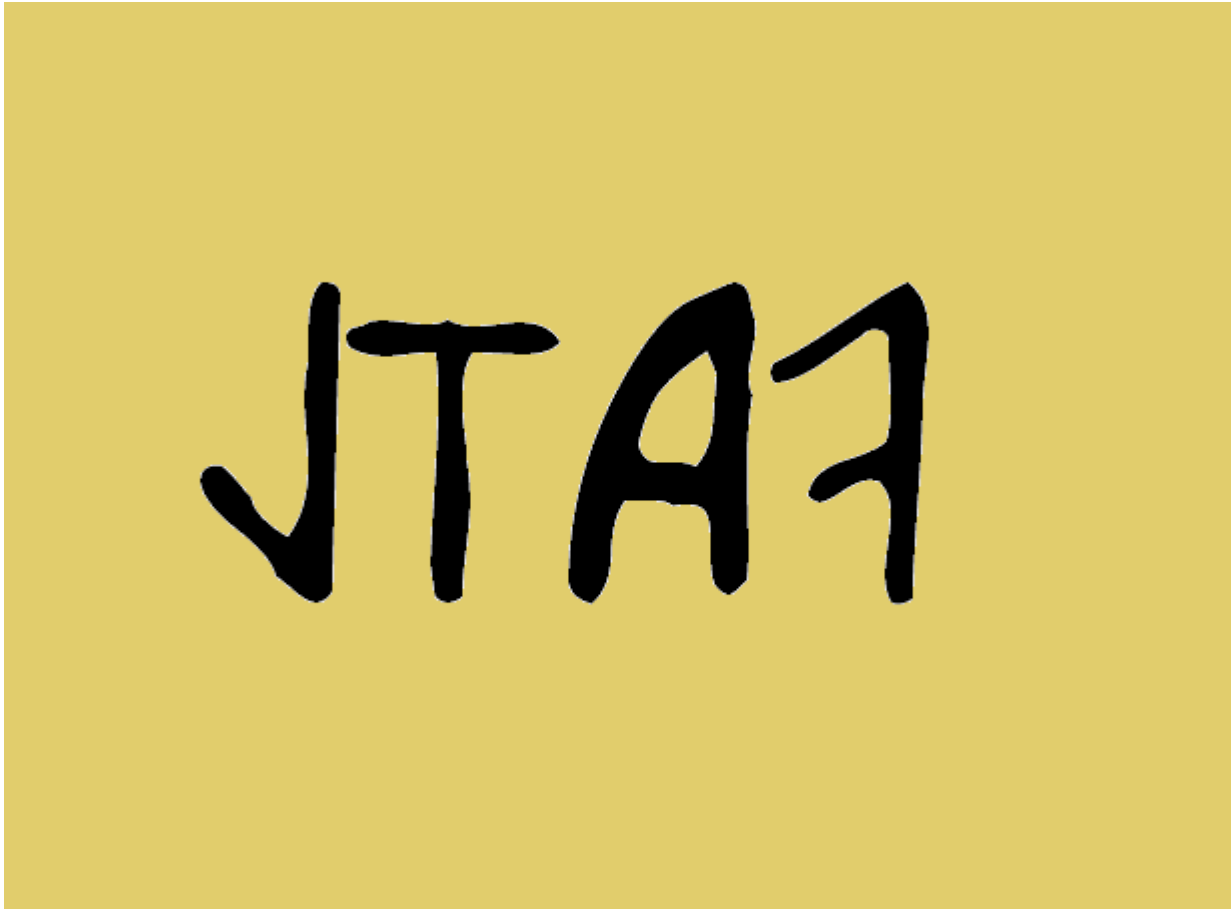
To his great surprise, something gleamed between the leaves of grass. It was an ancient coin and Isidoro as well equipped and passionate expert immediately recognized its origin: It was a work of Etruscans. It is said, that he left the disputing farmers without any further word (this behaviour would surely violate the provisions of today's Code of Conduct of European Mediator) and went to his surgery to further study his discovery. And he was may be even more astonished than the poor farmers when he read the letters FATL on the coin. This has for sure meant Fatluna, an Etruscan equivalent to Vetulonia. He just discovered a coin that was minted in the lost Etruscan city.

Another Stroke of Luck

This accidental discover forced Isidoro to more profound research in the region and, once again, the luck played an important role the further findings. Some days after, Isidoro travelled to close town called Colona Buriano where he asked the barkeeper about some Etruscan relicts. The good man, obviously not well informed about the oldest history of Tuscany answered, that there were plenty of Roman coins and sights in the neighbourhood. This answer inspired Isidoro with showing his coin discovered during mediation. The bartender looked at the coin and said that the letters reminded him the old inscription on the Roman wall of the town.

Not surprisingly, Isidoro was stunned. He run away from the coffee bar in order to check the town walls, according to some, he even forgot to pay for his coffee. He approached the rampart the

people from around believed to be Roman. Yet the wall was created from the larger stones in Etruscan way. You may imagine Isidoro's reaction when he saw that the inscription on the town wall was the very same as the one on his coin: FATL. The little Tuscan town Colona Buriano was actually Vetulonia! The location of the twelfth Etruscan Centre was finally rediscovered after hundreds of years.



Although it took some more months and years of persuasion of the administration and professional archaeologists to confirm Isidoro's theory, his contribution is today broadly recognized by all Etruscology. And the very first impulse to that unique discovery was mediation, be it indirectly.

Etruscan Intercultural Mediation

When it comes to the use of mediation within the Etruscan society, we are unfortunately even today very unclear. And what is worse, we will probably never discover the truth because of the lack of written materials. The secret of Etruscan alphabet and language was broken relatively recently. Furthermore, the Etruscans left only around ten thousands inscriptions which have been found so far. Unfortunately, only a minority of which are of sufficient length to give us some clues as far as the Etruscan culture and society is concerned.

Usually we would focus our attention to the Roman authors that have saved the knowledge about dozens of other cultures. Unfortunately, as already mentioned, the Romans chose a very unkind approach towards their former masters and tried to avoid almost all the references to their Etruscans beginnings as well as to the Etruscan culture in general. To this approach, there is only a couple of exceptions: One of them was the Roman emperor Claudius who even wrote a book on Etruscans. His work has however not survived till our times.

Yet still, there is a historic role of Etruscans related to mediation or better say to the other meaning of the verb "to mediate". They served as the cultural mediators between the Greeks and Romans by having transferred a significant portion of knowledge related to architecture, astronomy, culture or even the alphabet. This meaning of the term mediation is sometimes ignored yet if one regards the

nowadays culture, the fact that the Etruscans not only founded Rome yet also taught the Romans to write and to build the cities influenced the modern world more than many other events. This may be illustrated by the alphabet you may now read this contribution in.

Is not this an important mediators' assignment too? Especially in the world that quickly grows globalized, mediators should facilitate the exchange of culture information and bridging the international gaps. This role seems to have a new importance especially in the light of recent developments.

The lecture of impartiality

Yet this important role played by Etruscans is not the only mediation related to them. There is another one that remains more mediation in its modern meaning. In 391 BC, the Celtic tribe of Senones under the command of well known warrior Brennus laid a siege to Etruscan city of Clusium that was situated some 100 miles north of Rome. Terrified Etruscans citizens sent a plea for help to Rome. Yet instead of military assistance, Romans proposed a kind of mediation, as we are informed by Livy:

The three sons of M. Fabius Ambustus were sent as ambassadors to negotiate with the Gauls and warn them not to attack those from whom they had suffered no injury, who were allies and friends of Rome, and who, if circumstances compelled them, must be defended by the armed force of Rome. They preferred that actual war should be avoided, and that they should make acquaintance with the Gauls, who were strangers to them, in peace rather than in arms.¹

The Celts replied that they would not reject the offered peace, on condition that the poor city of Clusium would have ceded them a portion of its territory which it possessed. The Roman mediators asked the Celtic chief by “*what right they had to demand, under threat of war, territory from those who were its owners, and what business the Gauls had in Etruria.*”

This reality testing was however not appreciated by the invaders and after an exchanged of further insults, the battle broke up. Unfortunately, the mediators did not remain impartial and joined the Etruscan forces and one of them even killed one of the enemies' chiefs.

After such escalation of the conflict, the mediators returned to Rome with angry Celts behind them. Indeed, the Celtic king Brennus decided to abandon the siege of Cluisum in order to punish the alleged treachery of Roman negotiators, and eventually laid siege to Rome herself. The moral of the mediation in front of the walls of Clusium is, however, crystal clear: Once a mediator, stay impartial at any cost! After such escalation of the conflict, the mediators returned to Rome with angry Celts behind them. Indeed, the Celtic king Brennus decided to abandon the siege of Cluisum in order to punish the alleged treachery of Roman negotiators, and eventually laid siege to Rome herself. The moral of the mediation in front of the walls of Clusium is, however, crystal clear: Once a mediator, stay impartial at any cost! In this case, the breach of this duty resulted in conquest and destruction of the city of Rome, a historical event that has become famous for its sacred geese of Juno that warned Romans against approaching foes while the watch dogs stayed silent. Yet, during this unfortunate occasion no mediation was used to deal with the conflict. Thus this is a story to be told by historians and not by the mediators.

1) Titus Livius, History of Rome, 5.35.

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The graphic features a black background with white text and a circular icon. The icon depicts a group of five stylized human figures, with a magnifying glass positioned over the central figure. The background is accented with horizontal lines in blue and green.

This entry was posted on Sunday, March 22nd, 2015 at 1:22 pm and is filed under [History of mediation](#), [Language](#), [mediation traditions](#), [Negotiation](#), [Neutrality](#)

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