

EXPERIENCING ETRUSCAN POTS: CERAMICS, BODIES AND IMAGES IN ETRURIA

Lucy Shipley

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What is the object most commonly found during almost any archaeological excavation of material from the previous four thousand years? Ask any digger this question and the response will come, often with a groan born of hours of post-excavation analysis, ‘pottery.’ Ceramic objects are tough and durable, after their fragmentation into multiple pieces which appear with every scrape of a trowel. They are often easy to gloss together, placed in bulk find bags to be counted then forgotten, or sighed over as another piece of an object which can never be reconstituted. While the repetitive discovery of fragments of pottery can be taken for granted, these objects are a reminder of the importance of ceramic products in people’s lives. These objects accompanied individuals from the moment they awoke and ate or drank or washed their faces, providing food and refreshment through the day’s activities, to a late night of celebration, or simply the containers of a final drink before sleep. In a world without plastics, ceramics, alongside organic containers, were used for almost every substance which required protection or containment: from perfume to porridge. The experience of an Etruscan person, living day to day, would have been filled with interactions with ceramics, making them objects which can recall intimate transactions in the past to the archaeologist in the present.

Characterising that experience of Etruscan pottery is the concern of this book. What was it like to use and live with Etruscan pottery? How was the interaction between an Etruscan pot structured and constituted? How can that experience be related back to bigger questions about the organisation of Etruscan society, its increasingly urban nature and relationship with other Mediterranean cultures? More specifically, I aim to unpick both the physical encounter between vessel and hand, and the emotional interaction between the user of a pot and the images inscribed upon its surface. The decoration of pottery with human images, miniature reflections, distortions and imaginings of the people who once used them prompted a series of potentially deeply meaningful encounters. I will use the analysis of these intensely intimate interactions between people and pots to ask broader questions about Etruscan society during a period of transformation – querying whether four different communities within Etruscan Italy embraced similar or diverse forms of ceramic experience, and the implications of those choices on daily life in each place. These are two inland and two coastal communities, each with a different relationship with the wider Mediterranean world, and each with a ceramic record that bears witness to thousands of pot-person interactions. This book aims to examine social change as exemplified by local Etruscan experiences of familiar and novel forms of decorated ceramics – the daily impact of trade, interaction, belief and self-

definition that I argue can be assessed by considering the perspective of the Etruscan *user* of pottery.

To accomplish this bottom-up analysis, I have developed a system of ceramic analysis which suggests that such recreation and re-imagination of user experiences of pottery in the past is possible. By utilising a phenomenological approach, developed from recent engagements between phenomenology and archaeological practice in Italian prehistory, the experience of using any Etruscan vessel is evaluated and made available for analysis and comparison with other pots. Having answered the specific question of individual experiences of singular vessels, this study moves on to answer secondary research questions relating to experience in its wider social context. Were different traditions of ceramic use present in Etruria? Were they associated with particular regional groups or individual cities? How did imported vessels from Greece impact upon Etruscan users? How do the answers to these questions contribute to central arguments in Etruscan studies?

By comparing experiential data from across the region I construct interpretations of Etruscan ceramic use which suggest significant variations in the way pottery was being used in different areas. The data provides an opportunity to examine the impact of imported pottery: not only on the direct experience of Etruscan users, but also on Etruscan communities. The consequences of analysing experience for understanding the complex ways in which Etruscan occasions using pottery were being employed as markers of identity provide a new recognition of ceramics as powerful tools in the construction of individuals and the choreography of society. These are only three of the areas in which experiential analysis has the potential to contribute to wider arguments about Etruscan social practice. However, the analysis of experience is also valuable for its own sake: it considers pottery at a particular point in its biography (Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999), which has been somewhat marginalised by current approaches to ceramics. Joy (2009) has pointed out the relative difficulty of examining any object in the course of its use-life, as compared to the process of its production (birth) and deposition (death). This is perhaps the longest phase in any object life – performing the function for which it was originally designed until it is discarded. It is this long, sticky interim period, which is ironically when an object is perhaps least visible to the archaeologist, that experiential analysis can interrogate.

Traditional approaches to Etruscan ceramics have focused on the earliest phase of a vessel’s biography: its production. This has primarily been through the dual

techniques of typological and iconographic analysis (for the former, see Dragendorff 1895; cf Millett 1979; Neff 1993; Orton 1993; Rasmussen 1979, 1985; for the latter, see Arafat and Morgan 1989; Avramidou 2006; Beazley 1962; Del Chiaro 1970; Rausser 2002; Safran 2000; Williams 1982). These traditional methodologies have been focused on three key processes: recording pottery forms, defining their producers, and interpreting images. The former provides a framework for the dating of vessels, and a method for estimating provenance, aided and abetted by petrographic analyses. The value of such an approach, which has created an indispensable tool-kit for ceramic identification, is hard to overstate. The intricate and painstaking work of Sir John Beazley (1947, 1963, 1971, 1978, 1986), tracing the potters and painters of Athens and Etruria, provides a vision of a vibrant industry, and presents a detailed and personal production context for each individual vessel. Analyses of the iconography of painted vases can be used to assess the social context in which each pot was made, the concerns and desires of the audience which consumed it, in addition to the realities of the potter and painter's daily experience. Heavily informed by the relevant historical sources, the stories and allegories, myths and morals which are resplendent on such vases are then used to support a particular argument about an aspect of Greek or Etruscan society (Blundell and Rabinowitz 2008; Bonfante 2004; Jenkins and Williams 1985; Roth 2005; Sandhoff 2011).

More recent archaeological approaches to Etruscan ceramics have moved towards seeing pottery in a different context, rather than cataloguing production processes (Lewis 1997, 2003, 2009; Paolucci 2007a). Paleothodoros (2008:56) has called for the deconstruction of a unitary conception of Etruscan responses to ceramics, and emphasised the agency of families and individuals in their choice of funerary ceramics. However, methodologically, the same systems of categorisation and iconographic analysis have been used to undertake these studies: this time focused on the specific relevance of imagery to individual purchasers, or preferences for particular vessel kinds for burial. The same tried and tested methods developed to analyse the birth of a pot were used to consider vessels at the end of their lives: placed in the tomb, accompanying the Etruscan dead. Between the twin foci of these traditional and more recent approaches, if one assumes that pots in tombs were not simply bought and buried, lies a vast, gapping period of use.

The traditional methods can help to fill in this gap: typologies self-evidently catalogue and record the intricate variations in experience created by pottery forms. Each slight diversion from a stylistic theme would have impacted on an individual using it: each twitch of handle placement and wiggle in profile affecting how a vessel would have felt in the hand. Images of vessels being used on pottery could provide a vision of how they slotted in to physical experience, alongside representations of

pottery use in other contexts, such as tomb paintings and funerary furniture. In addition to direct comparison with images of pots in use, iconography can also be used to consider preferences in practice. Osborne (2001, 2003, 2007) has developed a comparative analysis of Greek and Etruscan pottery to argue that the Etruscan consumers of Attic pottery reproduced imported imagery in their own ceramic traditions, suggesting that images were actively considered while the vessel was in use. Giudici and Giudici (2009) performed a similar analysis, comparing the activities shown on vessels from different sites across Etruria and Magna Graecia to establish which were preferred by Etruscan users. Yet none of these methodologies really provide a comprehensive vision of the experience of using pottery in Etruria – how it felt in the hand, or on the mouth. The use-life of ceramics consisted of series of relationships with individual users and owners, built from thousands of individual interactions with different people. In order to deeply investigate the experience of using Etruscan ceramics, and to develop the results of that analysis into wider conclusions about Etruscan life, new methodologies are essential to augment and build upon traditional approaches.

This chapter is the first step in building and testing such methodologies for examining Etruscan experience, placing the chapters and analysis which follow in context. Firstly, the world of Etruscan users is introduced: the material culture which defines Etruscan assemblages and the traditions of scholarship which shape approaches to them. As discussed in more detail later in this study, the Etruscans occupy a slightly liminal position in terms of archaeological methodologies (Izzet 2007a: 10). A literate cultural group in contact with Greece and Rome, the Etruscans can be approached from a classical perspective, actively engaging with inscriptions and historical sources and developing careful and intricate interpretations from intense analyses of material culture. As the literature of the Etruscans has broadly not survived, however, the application of social theories and anthropological analyses used in prehistoric archaeology is equally appropriate, particularly for the early phases of Etruscan emergence from the Villanovan Iron Age and Late Bronze Age. A key part of this introduction to the Etruscan ceramic sphere is the presentation of one of the most important debates to which the experience of Etruscan pottery can contribute. This discourse surrounds the question of the role of imported ceramics in Etruria. This contentious issue will be considered at length to provide an idea of the potential for experiential analysis to contribute to this debate. Through the development of two anthropological case studies, I demonstrate the relevance of Etruscan experiences of Greek pottery, and suggest that imported ceramics should be conceived of as equally important to their Etruscan users as to their Greek makers. The inclusion of imported Greek material in this study is the result of these principles, while the discussion illustrates the divisions between scholars at work in Etruscology.

Having introduced the Etruscan context of this study in a broad sense, and through a more specific case study of interaction between Etruscan scholarship and the classical world, I turn to the prehistory of Italy and the approaches which have heavily influenced the design of this study. The work of a group of British prehistorians in the context of the Italian Neolithic is summarised in light of their employment of the dual conceptions of agency and phenomenology. The latter is the subject of Chapter 3, which develops the wider concepts of personal agency and phenomenal experience through engagements with feminist thought to form a methodology for investigating their role in Etruscan ceramics. Without agency, this phenomenal engagement could not take

place: it is only by acknowledging the subjectivity and power of people in the past to structure their own lives, make their own choices and live in the world on their own terms that their experiences can be isolated and analysed. The majority of these approaches inspired by phenomenology and agency in Italian prehistory are not applied in the specific context of ceramics, yet provide proof that these theoretical approaches can be applied with successful outcomes. The final act of this introductory chapter is to present the structure of the book: how the chapters which follow will put together the material culture and theoretical ideas described here and use them to investigate Etruscan ceramic experience.

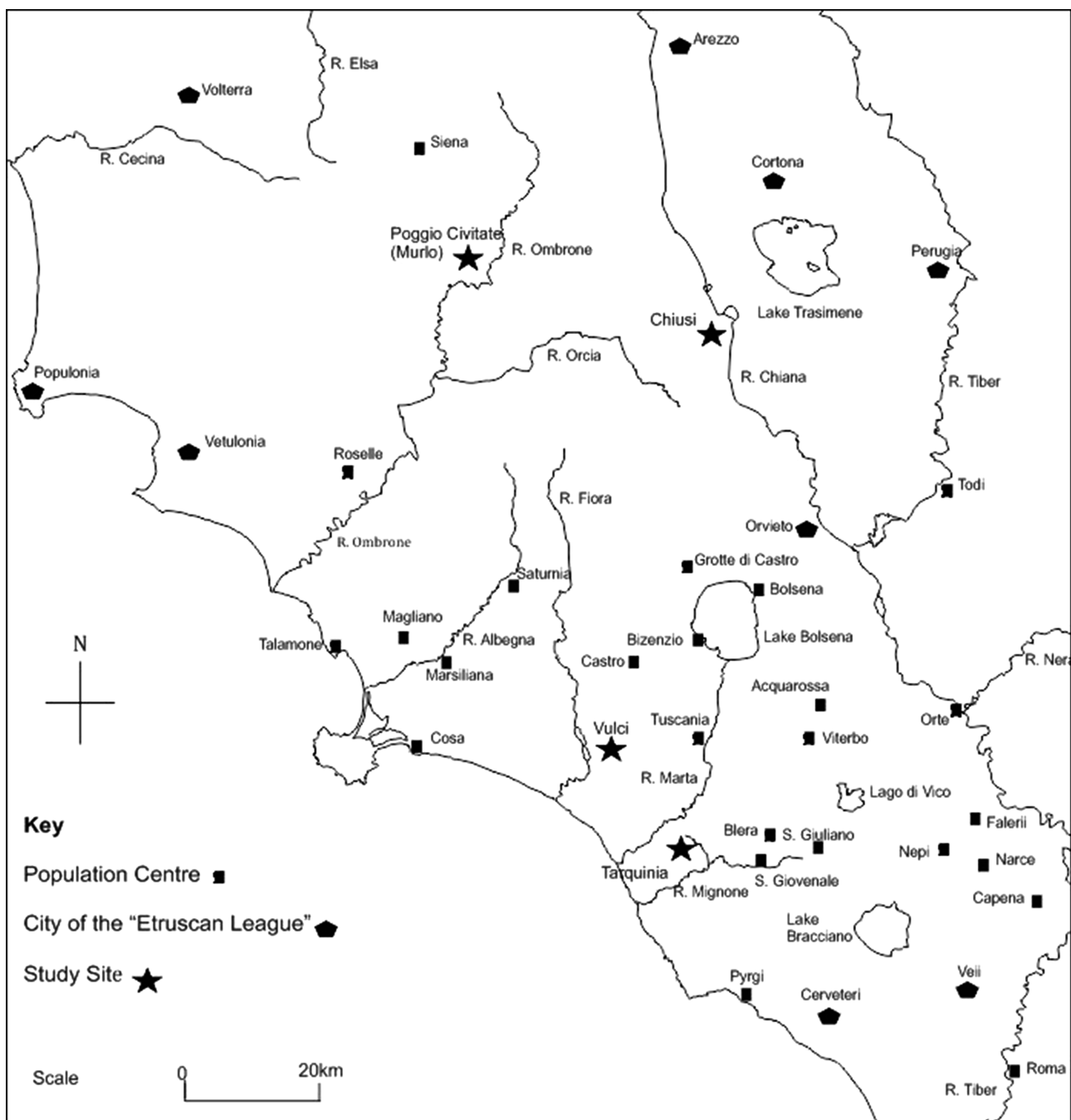


FIGURE 1.1: MAP OF ETRURIA

1.1 Etruscan Places, Etruscan Trade, Etruscan Things

Etruscan communities shared a distinct material culture in central Italy during the first millennium BC. The modern regions of Tuscany, Umbria, southern Emilia-Romagna and northern Lazio formed the centre of this Etruscan heartland, traditionally defined as bounded by the rivers Tiber and Arno. Although Etruscan influence extended from the Adriatic coast to the Bay of Naples, this central region was occupied by at least twelve settlement centres, and a number of smaller sites, as illustrated in Fig. 1.1. Pallottino (1984b: 124) has argued that these twelve cities formed the largest units of Etruscan society, and were united by shared religious and economic concerns. Banti (1973: 15-16) suggests that the overarching label of ‘Etruscans’ should be seen as a cultural, rather than a political grouping, and that settlement centres were more important than overarching ethnicity to the construction of identity. The origins of this group of communities remain a sticking point in Etruscan archaeology (Briquel 2001: 43).

Herodotus suggests the origins of Etruscan culture lie in Lydia,¹ a long-standing idea (Briquel 1991) which, with some variations, continues to gain support from modern scholars (Drews 1992; van der Meer 2004). The archaeological record, however, suggests a steady growth in population and a continuity in material culture in the region dating back to at least the ninth century BCE and the preceding Villanovan culture (Camporeale 2004: 170; Torelli 1997:26-43). Recent studies of DNA (Pellecchia et al 2007; Achilli et al 2007) which appear to support the immigration theory have been shown to be methodologically unreliable and deliberately designed to support the immigration hypothesis (Perkins 2009).

Periodization is a slippery and difficult activity, as pointed out by Hodder (1987: 5). However, the time periods shown in Table 1.1 are generally used to demarcate different periods of growth and change in Etruscan culture. The earlier Villanovan and Orientalising phases have names which, in English, are value-laden, with the latter in particular implying intense influence (if not outright immigration) from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Italian terms (in italics) for the earlier periods are less loaded and will be used instead where necessary. This study is focused on the experience of Etruscan ceramic users during the Archaic period, defined here as between 600 and 450 BCE. After a period of economic success in the preceding century, Etruscan urban communities were continuing to grow, with this wealth reflected in increasingly rich burial assemblages. These funerary collections of objects are, in spite of the depredations of centuries of *tombaroli* or grave robbers, the source for the majority of the Etruscan archaeological record: creating a paradoxical situation in which the presentation of the dead is better known than the activities of the living (D’Agostino 1985; Izzet 2007a: 16).

Period	Dates
Villanovan (<i>Prima età del ferro</i>)	900-750 BCE
Orientalizing (<i>Seconda età del ferro</i>)	750-600 BCE
Archaic	600–450 BCE
Classical	450–300 BCE
Hellenistic	300-100 BCE

TABLE 1.1: PERIODIZATION OF ETRUSCAN ARCHAEOLOGY

The ceramics which are used in this study to examine Etruscan experiences of their use in the main originate from these burial assemblages. The complexity and capriciousness of burial contexts necessitates some caution in the analysis of objects recovered from tombs (Morris 1992; Parker Pearson 2001). The presence of ceramics in tombs has been taken as indicative of their use in life: pottery placed with the dead is assumed to be, even if not itself used directly by the living, materially very close to ceramics which were being used by Etruscans prior to the grave. The different groups of pottery included in the study are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, but a distinction between two major collections can be drawn at the outset. Some pots in this analysis were made in Italy, but the majority, due to collection biases explored in detail later in Chapter 2, were made in Greece. The inclusion of so many seemingly foreign artefacts in a study of the Etruscans prompts a closer consideration of the relationship between the two groups, and presents an opportunity for the investigation of cultural interactions underlying everyday experience.

The role of Greek ceramics in Etruscan culture, seen as part of the wider relationship between Greeks and Etruscans, has been one of the most hotly debated issues in Etruscan studies (Arafat and Morgan 1994; Boardman 1975; Gill 1991, 1994; Ridgway 1997; Osborne 2001, 2007; Spivey 2006; Izzet 2004, 2007b, 2007c). The central question of this discourse is whether Etruscan consumers were clients of Greek technological mastery in a classic core-periphery model (cf Osborne and Boardman, for core periphery models see Champion 1995, Hall and Chase-Dunn 1993) or actively engaged in consuming and importing Greek produce acquired through trade between equals. The former view was being criticised as long ago as the work of Beazley (1947:xi) while the recent work of Riva (2010a, 2010b), Hodos (2009), Malkin (2002, 2004), Ra’ad (2001), van Dommelen (2001, 2010), Given (1999) and Dietler (1997, 2009) has demonstrated the colonial assumptions which underlie this type of Hellenocentric approach to the Ancient Mediterranean. In order to examine the experiences of Etruscan consumers of Greek ceramics, it is essential to engage with these arguments and develop a coherent hypothesis on the relationship between Greek pots and Etruscan owners. By using two similar historical and anthropological case studies, a clearer idea of the role of imported pottery in Etruria will be developed.

¹ Histories 1:94

A relevant historical parallel to the relationship between Greece and Etruria is the work of Felix Chami (1999a, 1999b) on the Iron Age of the Azanian coast of Tanzania. His research provides an example of a supposed peripheral zone, where interpretation has been plagued by colonial assumptions about the nature of trade and exchange within the region. The traditional 'story' of trade in this region was a fable in which Roman traders from the civilised Mediterranean provided the local inhabitants with iron tools in exchange for spices and ivory: a mirror image of later inequalities in trade in Africa. Chami's work with Paul Msemwa at the site of Kisiju demonstrated that not only were local groups in what is now Tanzania making their own iron tools, but that these were relatively common finds, alongside slag and iron making debris (Chami and Msemwa 1997). Additionally, through experimental archaeology work, Chami and Msemwa have shown that the inhabitants of the Rufiji delta and its offshore islands were capable of long sea voyages, and had access to sophisticated sea-faring technology in the form of large dhows. This seemingly peripheral community in fact is re-cast in the role of trans-ocean traders, who may have been actively trading as far away as India. A variety of objects from multiple sources were incorporated into daily life at Kisiju, creating a hybrid mixture of locally produced and imported tools.

Exchanged objects are important in the construction of identity, whether traded as commodities or exchanged as gifts. The networks of relations objects create simultaneously bind communities to each other as partners but also push them apart as separate entities. Anthropologically, there are numerous examples of active and interactive trade which have proved fruitful for discussions of ethnic identity (cf. Barth 1969; Cohen 1978; Horowitz 1985; Comaroff 1987). The model developed by Kipp and Schortmann (1989) suggests that elite exchange in luxury goods resulted in state formation, with exotic imports being used to create social inequality. Theodore-Pena has argued (2011) for an application of the Kipp-Schortmann model to the rise of Etruscan urban elites, suggesting that the formation of Etruscan polities is closely connected to the arrival of goods from the eastern Mediterranean. While I broadly agree with this hypothesis, I would argue that by the Archaic period and the intensification of trade between Greece and Etruria, a more accessible exchange network had developed, involving more, and more knowledgeable, consumers in Etruria.

The assumption that exporting groups are more politically powerful than importers underlies much of the Hellenocentric bias against Etruscan agency. While inequality may have been present in the distribution of goods through exchange systems, this cannot be used to characterise one partner community as lacking in agency or dynamism. One example based on trade between unequal groups which demonstrates the complexity of relationships between importers and exporters is that presented by Levi (1992). He draws together a detailed

discussion of the varying levels of trade between Raramuri and Mestizo groups in northern Mexico, and outlines the extent of networks ranging from individual peddlers working from village to village on foot, relying on contacts and friendships, to opportunist large scale traders shipping artworks northwards to the US having obtained them by seemingly exploitative means, with reciprocal gift giving and trading relationships lying in the middle. In the Raramuri case, art objects with relatively little value to the makers are traded for useful objects: Levi describes a coat worth \$4 traded for \$20 worth of pots (Levi 1992:11). The pots are of little worth to their user, compared to a coat which he could not have made himself nor purchased locally. The apparent exploitation of the Raramuri salesperson in the course of this sale is a fallacy created by the inappropriate ascription of value in this particular situation. This example illustrates the contextual nature of value: the space between one definition of value and another is that in which trade operates.

In a further step, Levi identifies Raramuri as cutting out the Mestizo middleman, and selling objects directly to American dealers themselves, often in large quantities and even through mail order (Levi 1992: 12). As Raramuri traders have noticed the increased value of 'old' pots, they have begun to deliberately break and repair new objects in order to secure a better price (Levi *ibid*: 19). There are two points relating to Etruscan/Greek relations which this case study helps to make. The first is that even when trading relationships may seem to be founded on unequal terms, things are not always as they first appear. Just as at Kisiju, the Raramuri have taken control of trade in order to obtain what they want and are now active in the maintenance of their identity through the sale of cultural objects. The second point relates to the pots themselves. The Raramuri example shows the production of seemingly culturally specific objects in response to demand from a different group. While Greeks were producing painted pottery for their own use, as the Raramuri still do, they were perfectly capable of incorporating designs more closely allied to indigenous Etruscan preferences. Whether this was happening in the case of Greek and Etruscan commerce will be made visible by comparing indigenous and imported user experiences.

There are several conclusions to draw from the Raramuri and Azanian case studies for the Etruscan situation. Firstly, as at Kisiju, local Etruscan agents actively chose to place imported ceramics in their houses and later in their tombs, and developed their own technologies to create similar objects. The desire to engage with Greek vessel forms and use their images on a regular basis demonstrates their importance to Etruscan lives, just as the seemingly valueless coat was important to the Raramuri trader. Secondly, this desire would not exist were the Etruscan audience not able to relate to and interpret imported images in relation to their own world, and to master and incorporate the skills required to use new vessel shapes. Whether the intricate details of myth were understood (in Greek terms), Etruscan

users created their own narratives based on the images they saw before them. It is this combination of relevance and desire which gave Greek ceramics value, rather than an intrinsic artistic worth perceived from the present. Etruscan consumers dictated the value of imported pottery, and their agency controlled the rhythm of trade in these objects. In the same fashion, American consumers of Raramuri pottery develop their own systems of meaning for the pots they buy, while Raramuri potters have changed their practice to suit the purchaser. The shared message from both case studies relates to value: to Etruscan users, Greek ceramics were valuable enough to purchase, and desirable enough to require the development of relationships with new kinds of objects.

This relating to things and styles emphatically does not change the ethnic identity of the person doing the relating and using. Incorporating a certain object into one's lifestyle does not mean a transformation into its producer or designer. Buying Chinese ceramics in the eighteenth century did not make Britons Chinese, although they invented stories to relate to the images on imported ceramic wares (O'Hara 1993). In the modern world, those who buy Raramuri ceramics do not become Raramuri, or even Mexican: they become those who can relate to and explain the presence of these objects in their home and incorporate the objects into their sense of self. The incorporation of the experience of ceramics made in Greece yet used and buried in Etruria into this study is a reflection of their incorporation into the lives of the Etruscans who chose to use and interact with these pots during their lifetime. The opportunity to analyse the experience of using such vessels, and ascertain their role in Etruscan uses which incorporated imported ceramics, provides a chance to consider the development and expression of a distinct form of Etruscan identity.

1.2 Agency and Phenomenology in Italian Prehistory

The debate surrounding relationships between Greeks and Etruscans is just one area of Etruscan archaeology's discourse which an examination of Etruscan experience can contribute to. The inter-connected nature of practice in different Etruscan cities, whether linked to political allegiances or ties of relationships, can also be approached through the ways that individuals were using and experiencing objects. These extensions begin with the action of a single person, and recognising their choices. There are three distinct examples of the investigation of choices, experience and agency in the Italian prehistoric past which are particular influences on the design of this study, in addition to the call for contextualisation in Etruscan ceramic studies. The first of these is focused upon recognising the active nature of choices and actions in the past: the realisation that the individual Etruscan person exercised control over themselves and was the catalyst for change in their own lives.

The work of John Robb has repeatedly demonstrated the potential for applications of archaeological theory in the

archaeology of the Italian Neolithic, with a particular focus on the use of agency (1998, 2001, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2010). He provides both methodologies for practice, and careful case studies which demonstrate the utility of agency theory in reconceptualising traditional arguments and reframing interpretations to reflect the powerful nature of people and choices in the past. One of Robb's case studies is the analysis of six objects which are used to draw a prehistory of Italy through their entangled social relationships. This narrative uses what he considers the most recent development in agency theory: the specific enaction of agency through relationships with objects, and the recognition that objects themselves are sites of power (Robb 2008a: 507-9). This form of agency is closely linked to individual projects: projects of self-construction, self-definition and the 'production of certainty' (Robb *ibid*: 502). Each moment that an Etruscan individual picked up a decorated pot, they engaged in one of these agential projects, exercising choice in transforming the body through its connection with a vessel. At the same moment, the pot shapes the exchange, providing the parameters in which the Etruscan subject can refashion themselves and their experiences. The conception that traditions of practice themselves have agency to influence and manipulate past individuals adds another layer of agential relations to the exchange (Robb 2008b), while images and representations also have the potential to impact on the human actor. A flowing stream of different types of powerful social relationships are all wrapped up in the seemingly simple lifting of a vessel, and will continue to mix and move together after the object and actor are separated.

Robb, in his work with Marcia Anne Dobres, suggests that a variety of methodologies can be used to integrate the agency of past actors into archaeological interpretations (Dobres and Robb 2005: 163). One of the methods which they identify is phenomenology, the theoretical heart of this book. The detailed application of phenomenal thought to Etruscan ceramics is the subject of another chapter, but such approaches have been previously tried and found successful in other theatres in Italian prehistory. The work of Ruth Whitehouse (2001, 2007) on the use of caves as ritual places used the physical characteristics of these sites to develop a view of the experience of using them, building this to a re-evaluation of ritual practice in southern Italy and the wider Mediterranean. The same process of using the features of individual sites to draw larger conclusions about experience and society will be employed here. The sites of experience in this case are not dark, cramped spaces in which the body is engulfed: they are rather curving spheres of clay, to be touched and incorporated into the body with the hand and through the mouth.

The same principles of experiential analysis are working in both scenarios: the same features which describe a cave as a liminal space between worlds are perhaps less clear than those which describe a pot as a catalyst for the acquisition and performance of specific identities, but both are extant for the archaeologist. The development of practical methods for the recording and analysis of

such experiences, developed at the Tavoliere-Gargano project lead by Sue Hamilton (et al 2006), is considered at length in a later chapter. Suffice to say that this second phenomenological project, also designed in an Italian scenario, this time focused on experiencing settlement sites in Neolithic Puglia, was as successful as the work of Whitehouse and Robb in advancing knowledge about the lives of individuals, and the wider experience of groups in prehistoric Italy.

All these case studies were developed for use in a time far distant from the world inhabited by the Etruscans. The late Iron Age world of Etruria, although perhaps rendered more familiar than the Neolithic through textual and archaeological study, has not previously been approached in such an explicitly phenomenological fashion. The success of such methodologies in earlier periods suggests the potential for such techniques in the Etruscan case. In addition, one scholar of Etruscan archaeology has come very close to considering the experience of her subjects. Vedia Izzet (2007a: 40) presents an analysis of Etruscan material culture from the perspective of the viewer. Her focus is primarily on mirrors, architecture and other objects engaging directly with the individual Etruscan person, and the impacts of objects in the construction of identity. Izzet uses the concepts of boundaries and surfaces as ideas to drive an interpretation of Etruscan society as closely linked to the negotiation of objects and spaces in a ground-breaking and effective archaeological narrative. She makes it clear that ‘the object... will be taken as the point at which meaning is generated, interpreted and acted upon’ (Izzet *ibid*: 31). Izzet also clarifies that she does not use ceramics as a case study for her argument as they do not directly manipulate the surface of the body (Izzet *ibid*: 3). Through the application of phenomenological thought to consider the experience of that Etruscan body, I will demonstrate that pottery has a large role to play in the construction of the Etruscan identity, with far-reaching conclusions for Etruscan social relationships on a local and regional scale.

1.3 Seeking Etruscan Experiences

This chapter has introduced the key research question of this study: what was the experience of using an Etruscan pot like for an Etruscan person? It has also introduced the potential follow-up questions to this primary investigation of a seemingly simple interaction. Through contextualising the desire to ask and answer this question, I have introduced the archaeological background to the Etruscan interaction between pot and person, in addition to the discourse surrounding one of the most fraught debates on which that interaction may shed light. I have introduced the three approaches in Italian prehistory which have inspired the decision to investigate experience in a phenomenological way, and the calls in Etruscan ceramic studies for new methodologies and approaches to consider Etruscan pots in context. To conclude this chapter, I will outline how these arguments are re-formed in more detail,

and used to actively answer the question of experiencing Etruscan pottery.

Chapter 2 considers the full disciplinary context of this study. The position of Etruscan studies as betwixt and between classical archaeology and prehistory did not arise by accident, nor is it a coincidence that archaeological theory has been under-applied in Etruscology. To use ideas developed from social theory successfully, it is essential to understand why such approaches have not been tried. By reaching back to the very beginning of Etruscan studies, and tracing the connection between political ideology and archaeological narratives, I argue that the modern situation of theoretical avoidance is the result of centuries of application of political biases to Etruscan archaeology. In the wake of the 20th century cataclysm of World War II and its aftermath, I suggest that Italian Etruscology avoided its connections with fascist political theory by abandoning the explicit use of theory, while continuing to develop interpretations allied to Gramscian marxist thought. In the British case, I suggest that a similar apprehension and nervousness of subjectivity in archaeological practice born from the heritage of Grand Tour literature has restricted the application of social theory to Etruscan archaeology. By undertaking this historiographic analysis, I consider that it becomes possible to make more informed choices about the direct application of theory to the Etruscan world, and to establish that this study is part of a new engagement with interpretive experimentation developing in Etruscology in the last decade.

Chapter 3 outlines the development of a theoretical approach, demonstrating the origin of the phenomenal ideas which are used to develop a direct methodology for the analysis of Etruscan experience. It goes back to Merleau-Ponty’s original development of the phenomenology of Hegel, and then argues that feminist-interpretations of phenomenal thought have the potential to add agency and specificity to his narrower project which pioneered the application of phenomenology to the experience of a single, generic subject. I then examine the application of phenomenology in archaeological practice, demonstrating that rigorous practical methodologies can be formed from phenomenological principles through an in-depth Italian case study. I then develop a specific phenomenology which focuses on objects, and, particularly, on pots, by expanding Gell’s object agency beyond art to all physical characteristics of material culture.

The theoretical framework of Chapter 3 sets up a methodology for the investigation of experience, presenting a phenomenology of objects which can be used to develop specific methods. Chapter 4 picks up that methodological thread, detailing how the experience of using ceramics is broken down into four phases, and how pots will be re-categorised according to their relationship with the body of their original user. It then presents the process of gathering together a data set for testing, providing the geographical and technological context of the 1164 pots used to test the

specific methodologies used to analyse each phase of experience. Each of these phases is considered in one of the following analytical chapters, and each moves from the specific methods used to extract experiential data from the pottery corpus through comparative analysis of different pottery groups to a growing argument for a clear pattern of Etruscan ceramic use.

Chapter 5 explores the direct relationship between the body of the user and the clay body of a vessel. Chapter 6 moves to the decoration on the surface of a clay pot, and the impact of that decoration's constitution and placement on the experience of the user. Chapter 7 is the first of two chapters focused on the images used to decorate ceramics, and considers the influence of the bodies depicted on clay surfaces. Chapter 8 extends this analysis to what those bodies are doing, and how the actions of static figures immured in clay could impact on the Etruscan person who used them. The final chapter, Chapter 9, pulls together the arguments made in each individual chapter and uses them to build a series of conclusions about Etruscan experience of ceramics, and what those experiences suggest about wider Etruscan society.