

Cultural Competition: A Darwinian View of Cultural Evolution as it Applies to the Early Development and Interaction Between Rome and Etruria

Matilda Vanessa Stevens

BAncHist(Hons), Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, October 2014

The Etrusco-Roman relationship is a dynamic that held much significance within the early cultural development of ancient Italian culture. But how did this relationship develop? Was it impacted by the rate of urbanisation within each culture? These questions form the basis of a study into the early urbanisation of the city of Rome and how this impacted the development of the relationship with Etruria. Observing this interaction through the lens of evolutionary archaeology provides an opportunity to gain clarity as well as to practically test the parameters of the theory. Through this application it has become clear that the theory needs to be altered in order to directly apply Darwinian principles to the study of cultural interaction and archaeological development.

This altered version of evolutionary archaeology was applied to two case studies in order to support and test the changes, as well as striving for clarity regarding the early relationship between Rome and Etruria. Naturally the city of Rome, especially the Forum and Palatine Hill regions, served as one case study. The Etruscan Late Iron Age and Early Bronze Age settlement of Poggio Civitate served as the Etruscan counterpart, located 25 km south of the modern city of Siena. Artefacts were still utilised as the unit of measurement, indicators of adaptation and environmental influence, as evolutionary archaeology demands. In addition, the influence of the landscape in governing settlement patterns and the overall success of each site is a point of focus as an influence in urban development. Finally, the relationship between these societies is treated as a relationship between two 'species' to gauge the applicability of evolutionary theory to cultural interaction.