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# The Etruscan Studies of Pier Vettori

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**Abstract**

This paper seeks to assess the contribution of Florentine philologist Pier Vettori to Renaissance Etruscan studies through an examination of his literary works, unpublished letters, and notes on antiquarian topics. Several recently discovered manuscript pages in the Staatsbibliothek, Munich, as well as his correspondence with Cardinal Marcello Cervini, show that Vettori's Etruscan studies were both wide-ranging and sustained over many years, reflecting his interest in the history, artifacts, alphabet, and language of ancient Etruria. This analysis reveals that Vettori was

an important figure in Florentine antiquarianism of the mid-sixteenth century, while presenting new evidence for the period's nascent Etruscan studies more broadly.

**Keywords**

Pier Vettori – Marcello Cervini – Etruscans – antiquities – antiquarianism – rediscovery – Renaissance

The Florentine philologist Pier Vettori (1499–1585) is best known for the numerous editions of classical texts that he produced over his long career. Scholars have paid little attention to his study of the ancient Etruscans, although he had a reputation as a specialist in Etruscan matters in his own lifetime and for centuries thereafter. In his treatise on the Florentine vernacular, *Il Gello* (1549), Pier Francesco Giambullari names Vettori as a 'most learned and … diligent investigator of ancient things', who had shared with Giambullari information on Etruscan antiquities and inscriptions.[1] In 1547, an agent of Florentine duke Cosimo I de' Medici sought Vettori's expertise in translating an Etruscan inscription.[2] Nearly two centuries later, Anton Francesco Gori, in his *Defense of the Etruscan Alphabet* (1742), counted Vettori among those who 'have

[1] Giambullari, *Il Gello* (1549), 96.

[2] 'Giovanni Francesco Lottini (Il Lottino) in Cerreto Guidi to Pier Francesco Riccio in Florence, 12 October 1547. Mediceo del Principato, vol. 1173, fol. 733 recto, Medici Archive Project Map Doc DocId#8177: "… if Messer Pier Vettori happens to be there, show it to him to see if he understands anything or if he knows anything about it, or if he can tell us anything at all, because it would give the duke great pleasure"'.

labored over the alphabet of the ancient Etruscans'.[3] This paper considers Vettori's study of the Etruscan civilization through an examination of his literary works as well as his unpublished letters and notes on antiquarian topics. It focuses on several important, yet little known, manuscript pages from Vettori's collection, placing them in the context of broader discussions about Etruscan antiquities and the Etruscan alphabet in sixteenth-century Italy. It also explores Vettori's own writings on Etruscans, paying particular attention to his correspondence with Cardinal Marcello Cervini, later Pope Marcellus II. These sources offer considerable insight not only into Vettori's own antiquarian interests but also on the period's nascent Etruscan studies more broadly.

Vettori was among the most prolific and esteemed scholars of sixteenth-century Italy. Born in Florence in 1499 to a prominent family, he obtained a broad humanistic education under the direction of Andrea Dazzi, Marcello Virgilio Adriani, and Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, among others. In his early years, Vettori opposed Medici rule in Florence and was a defender of the last republic, established in 1527 after the Medici were expelled. In 1530, he delivered an impassioned call-to-arms to the Florentine militia against the impending siege of Charles V.[4] When the city fell that year, he withdrew to S. Casciano and focused on his scholarly work. But despite his earlier opposition, in 1539, Duke Cosimo I called Vettori back to Florence to teach at the Studio Fiorentino, where he offered lessons on Greek and Latin authors for the next forty-five years.[5]

[3] Gori, *Difesa del alfabeto degli antichi toscani*, 220.

[4] Published in Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, 418–424.

[5] This sketch of Vettori's life is drawn from Piras, 'Vettori, Piero', accessed 7 March 2025.

Over the course of his long career, Vettori published numerous editions of Greek and Roman texts, including the work of Cicero, Cato, Varro, Aristotle, and Euripides. He also authored works related to the region of Tuscany: A history of Florence, now lost, the *Viaggio di Annibale per la Toscana* [*Voyage of Hannibal in Tuscany*, 1559], and the *Trattato delle lodi et della coltivatione de gl'ulivi* [*Treatise on the praises and cultivation of olives*, 1569]. In the 1560s and 1570s, he composed funeral orations for Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici (1562), Grand Duke Cosimo I (1574), Cosimo's wife Eleonora di Toledo (1562), and Emperor Maximilian II (1576), as well as an oration in praise of Joan of Austria (1566), wife of Francesco I de' Medici. His vast correspondence, housed primarily in the British Library and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, testifies to his numerous contacts with the scholars of his day, including Benedetto Varchi, Vincenzio Borghini, Fulvio Orsini, and Marcello Cervini.[6]

Vettori was a humanist, and his written work about the Etruscans is therefore largely based on his reading of ancient Greek and Roman authors, especially Livy. It was also influenced by Florentine pride in Tuscany's Etruscan heritage and a local tradition that Florence itself had an Etruscan past. As many scholars have discussed, most notably Giovanni Cipriani in his *Mito etrusco nel rinascimento fiorentino* (1980), a tradition extending at least to the thirteenth century held that the ancient Roman colony of *Florentia* was settled not by Romans alone but also by Etruscans who immigrated to the new city after the Romans destroyed their nearby home of Fiesole.[7] In the 1420s, Leonardo Bruni celebrated the legacy of Etruria and praised Etruscan

[6] Piras, 'Vetteri, Piero', accessed 7 March 2025.

[7] Hartwig, *Chronica*, 47–55; Villani, *Nuova cronica*, 1:146 (*Cronica* 4.1). See Rubinstein, 'Beginnings of Political Thought'.

wealth, power, and religious piety in his *History of the Florentine People*, and Florentine humanists from Salutati to Machiavelli all emphasized the role of the Etruscans in founding the city.[8]

Vettori's orations and lectures, many of which were published in his lifetime or shortly after his death, reflect this pride. In his oration to the Florentine military, for example, he appeals to ancient narratives of Etruscan military might to rally the Florentines to fight for their freedom: 'Those good ancient Tuscans', he writes,

> just as they were the inventors of augury and praised intensely for those ceremonies, also deserve great fame in warfare, by which they expanded their dominion to the extent that almost all of Italy submitted to their arms, and their empire extended from one sea to the other. … We may therefore trust, if we direct our spirits entirely to this praiseworthy army, that we shall be able to renew the *imperium* and glory of those warlike Etruscans, because we too were born under the same sky.[9]

[8] Bruni, *History*, 1:19 (*Historiae* 1.13). For an analysis of Bruni's view of Tuscany's Etruscan history, see Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 1:53–67. For further discussion of the Etruscan 'myth' in Florence, see Cipriani, *Il mito etrusco*.

[9] In Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, 419–420.

He draws on similar themes in an undated letter, addressed simply 'to the reader', published in 1586.[10] In a discussion of the construction of ancient cities, first by the Greeks and then by the Etruscans, Vettori writes,

> The ancient Etruscans subdued a great part of Italy with their arms and military prowess, and established cities there, so much that both our seas take their names from them … and even when they were finally conquered … the Romans continued to send their children there to learn the art of haruspicy, which the Roman deeply valued".[11]

He goes on to relate how, after the Roman conquest of Etruria, the Romans colonized their cities and expelled their magistrates, bringing with them new customs and a new language.

The tradition that early Florence had been inhabited by the Etruscans was alive and well in Cosimo I's Florence. In the 1540s, two scholars of the Accademia Fiorentina, Giambattista Gelli and Pierfrancesco Giambullari, produced treatises in which they argued that the city of Florence and its vernacular had their origins with the Etruscans.[12] Around the same time, a friar named Santi Marmocchini penned a similar treatise, the *Dialogo in defensione della lingua toscana* [*Dialogue in Defense of the Tuscan Language*, ca. 1547], arguing that the Florentine vernacular

[10] Vettori, *Epistolarum*, book 8, letter 5, 176–183.

[11] Vettori, *Epistolarum*, book 8, letter 5, 179.

[12] Gelli, *Dell'origine di Firenze*; Giambullari, *Il Gello*, 1546 and 1549.

descended from Hebrew via the Etruscans.[13] These treatises differ from those of the humanists in that they argue that the city of Florence itself was established long before the Romans settled in the Florentine territory. They based their claims on Annius of Viterbo's (1432–1502) *Antiquitates*, a compendium of forgeries published in Rome in 1498. The text traces the origin of Etruria to the biblical patriarch Noah, whom Annius identified with the pagan god Janus. After the biblical Flood, Noah/Janus and his plentiful offspring repopulated the Italian peninsula, founding cities and civilizing the people. Florence in turn was founded by Hercules 'the Egyptian', scion of the Egyptian king Osiris, and settled by the Etruscan people of Fiesole and Arignano.[14] This narrative granted Florence both an illustrious founder and a legacy far more ancient than that of Rome.

Vettori did not embrace the Annian thesis. He did, nevertheless, praise Tuscany's Etruscan legacy in order to celebrate Cosimo I as prince of a new, unified Tuscan state. In his oration for Cosimo's funeral, delivered at S. Lorenzo in 1574, Vettori praised the Etruscans, whom he calls Tyrrhenians, following Herodotus's view that the ancient people emigrated from Asia Minor:

> I shall begin with the dignity of the region and the fatherland: for this is the region which the Tyrrhenians, who came from Lydia, inhabited in ancient times, a nation which draws great praise in religion and war. Ancient Etruria subdued a large part of Italy and Gaul with its arms, … sending colonies to very remote places. … What other nation can claim

[13] Marmocchini, *Dialogo*. For a study of this text, see Saracco, 'Un'apologia della *Hebraica veritas*', 215–246.

[14] For additional discussion and bibliography, see Hillard, 'Mythic Origins'.

more illustrious ancestors and more honorable origins? And what land could compete with ours in excellence, justice, and bravery?[15]

In his public works, then, Vettori adopted the celebratory tone familiar from earlier humanist narratives of the foundation of Florence. Elsewhere, however, his work reflects a more earnest interest and critical mind. This may be seen in Vettori's interest in Etruscan antiquities and epigraphy, which is attested by his correspondence and notes in his collection, and even by his published work. In the aforementioned letter, Vettori notes the presence of 'certain monuments [which] remain, made of stone or of bronze, in the old towns of the Etruscans, such as Populonia, Volterra, and Arezzo, and also in Gubbio, where there are publicly preserved several large bronze tablets, incised with Etruscan letters. These, however, cannot be read, nor can any sense be derived from them'.[16] Here Vettori is referring to the Eugubine Tables, seven bronze plaques discovered before 1456 near Gubbio (**Fig. 1**).[17] The plaques are inscribed in the Umbrian language but were widely believed to be Etruscan during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

According to Giambullari, Vettori was also interested in an Etruscan tomb discovered near Castellina in Chianti in 1508, an event that aroused the excitement and wonder of scholars, churchmen, statesmen, and artists across the region.[18] A detailed account of the discovery is recorded in a letter by the Florentine statesman Marcello Adriani, which is preserved in a mid-

[15] Vettori, *Oratio*, n.p.

[16] Vettori, *Epistolarum*, book 8, letter 5, 180.

[17] On their discovery, see Prosdocimi, *Le Tavole Iguvine*, 1:18–23.

[18] See Hillard, 'Leonardo and the Etruscan Tomb'.

sixteenth-century copy in the Codex Pighianus (**Fig. 2**).[19] Adriani notifies the cardinal about the discovery of 'a tomb very recently excavated in the Chianti, near the town of Castellina', relating how a farmer unearthed a vaulted cavern while planting a vineyard. He describes a vault 'constructed without mortar, but from overlapping stones lying on top of one another so as to be self-supporting'.[20] Among other things, he notes the presence of numerous urns with gabled lids, images of youths engaged in sport and embracing, and the effigy of a woman holding a golden bowl.[21] At the lower right, the page displays the plan of the tomb, Etruscan inscriptions, and sketches of two urns, copies of the originals that Adriani sent to Soderini with his letter. Next to a transcription of Adriani's letter that describes the form of the tomb and its contents, the sheet presents drawings of two urns. Vettori, who had been a pupil of Adriani in his youth, shared another drawing of the tomb with Giambullari, as Giambullari himself reports in his *Gello*. Giambullari argued that the right-to-left orientation of the Etruscan script and its perceived similarity to Hebrew show that it was based on Aramaic. He pointed to Etruscan inscriptions found on 'many very ancient stones' from 'different places in Tuscany', including those found at Castellina. 'In 1507', Giambullari wrote,

> an underground chamber was discovered near Castellina … where statues, ashes, ornaments, and Etruscan inscriptions were found. He assured his interlocutor of his credibility, stating, 'I would be happy to show you a copy of them if you like, which our

[19] MS Lat. fol. 61, fol. 55v. Transcribed with analysis in Conestabile, *Second spicilegium*, 42–52.

[20] Conestabile, *Second spicilegium*, 45.

[21] Conestabile, *Second spicilegium*, 46.

most learned Pier Vettori has shown and given to me, along with an Etruscan alphabet, which wasn't yet out at the time'.[22]

The documents that Vettori showed to Giambullari are generally considered untraced, but they are preserved in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. They form part of a collection of epigraphic studies that Vettori compiled throughout his life, which were sent to him by his friends and associates. These are in many hands, and in most cases their precise origin has not been determined. The sheets related to the discovery at Castellina are on blue paper and are clearly a pair.[23] They are in an unknown hand but must date between 1508, when the tomb was discovered, and 1546, when they are mentioned in Giambullari's *Gello*. The first sheet presents illustrations of two Etruscan urns, each topped with a reclining female effigy, one resting on her left elbow, the other holding a large bowl (**Fig. 3**). The vessels themselves are decorated with sculpted reliefs, one featuring putti, which are playing and embracing, and the other a flaming sacrificial cup. The second sheet shows ten lines of Etruscan inscriptions (**Fig. 4**). The accompanying annotations explain that this text came from the urns represented on the other sheet. Beneath them, the plan of a cruciform tomb chamber is labeled as 'the room where the urns were [found], and its dimensions'.

[22] Giambullari, *Il Gello* (1546), 45; Giambullari, *Il Gello* (1549), 96.

[23] *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae*, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, Munich, MS CLM 743, fols. 1v and 2r. These documents related to the tomb at Castellina were recently published in Hillard, 'Zaccaria Zacchi'.

A comparison of the inscriptions and illustrations on the Munich sheets with those in the Codex Pighianus reveal that both derive from Adriani's correspondence with Soderini. Both portray two carved stone urns of a typical Hellenistic type, with a rectangular base and a reclining female figure on the lid. In one, the base is decorated with a flaming sacrificial cup, while the woman holds a bowl, presumably the golden bowl mentioned in Adriani's letter. In the other, the effigy holds no cup, and the base is adorned with a small aedicule. The inscriptions consist of the same letters arranged in a similar pattern, and the accompanying annotations in each similarly describe where each epigraph was found. Despite these similarities, it is unlikely that either sheet is a copy of the other. The embracing putti on the Munich sheets do not appear in the Codex Pighianus, but they do correspond to a passage in Adriani's letter, which describes images of 'youths engaged in sport and embracing'.[24] Additionally, a note above the plan appears in Latin on the Berlin sheet, but in Italian on the Munich sheet, and the proportions of the tomb chamber are dissimilar. Rather than one copying the other, the sheets must derive from a common lost source, perhaps the original documents that accompanied Adriani's letter. The formal tone and literary content of his letter suggest, in fact, that it and the drawings were never intended for the cardinal alone but were to be copied and disseminated among a wide group of learned men.

In addition to the drawings and transcriptions from Castellina, Giambullari also stated that Vettori shared with him 'an Etruscan alphabet, which wasn't yet out at the time'.[25] A third sheet

[24] Conestabile, *Second spicilegium*, 46: '… plures imagines lascivientium juvenum et se invicem deosculantium'.

[25] Giambullari, *Il Gello* (1546), 45; Giambullari, *Il Gello* (1549), 96.

from Vettori's collection, tucked between the other two and in a different hand, presents an Etruscan alphabet along with a commentary on an Etruscan inscription (**Figs. 5 and 6**).[26] This sheet, previously unpublished, presents new evidence for the early study of the Etruscan language. The alphabet occupies the left side of the page and presents Etruscan characters alongside the Latin ones to which they were believed to correspond. Beneath the alphabet, an annotation reads 'This is read from right to left in the manner of Hebrew' and, below that, the words: 'I have interpreted what is written below on the basis of this alphabet, which was sent to me from Montepulciano by a friend'. Here the author is referring to another Etruscan inscription, transcribed below, which the author viewed 'in Cortona, on an ancient and rough stone', which was discovered among some bushes in a vineyard. In the text that follows, which continues onto the verso of the sheet, the author compares letters in the inscription with letters in the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew alphabets, concluding that certain elements of Etruscan derive from Hebrew: 'It is necessary to compare the nouns, expressions, verbs, and articles with those used by the Hebrews. The language has some sort of kinship with Hebrew, since the first men after the flood to inhabit that region of Tuscany were Hebrews'. In this document, the anonymous author thus engages in the polemic raised by Giambullari on the origin of the Florentine vernacular. It is possible that Vettori did not just share the alphabet and inscriptions with Giambullari but that the two men discussed the origin of the language as well.

The author concludes by noting that he has seen other Etruscan alphabets, but, since they were already published in Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi's *Introductio in Chaldaicam Linguam*

[26] *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae*, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, Munich, MS CLM 743, fols. 1v *bis* and 2r *bis*.

[*Introduction to the Chaldean Language*, 1539], he has not transcribed them. The one he sent seems 'more accurate and faithful' than those. The reference to Teseo Ambrogio (1469–1550) dates the sheet to between 1539, the date of the *Introductio*, and 1546, the date of Giambullari's *Gello*. Teseo Ambrogio presented two versions of the Etruscan alphabet, claiming that he received one indirectly from Giovanni Achillini and the other from a manuscript in the library of Antonio de' Fanti, a scholar from Treviso[27] (**Figs. 7 and 8**). In fact, the two alphabets are similar but arranged in a different order, and both reflect little understanding of real Etruscan letters—only four letters in his first alphabet, and none in his second, are correctly identified.

The alphabet from Vettori's collection bears little resemblance to either of the two published by Teseo Ambrogio. Instead, it derives from an earlier alphabet, found in the *Historiae* of Sigismondo Tizio (1458–1528), a monumental history of Siena composed between 1506 and the author's death in 1528 (**Fig. 9**). Sigismondo's work was, in fact, not yet 'out', having not been published until the twentieth century.[28] Manuscript copies of Sigismondo's work circulated in the sixteenth century, and variations of his Etruscan alphabet appear in the work of Marmocchini and Giambullari, as well as in the so-called Codex Londinenses, an important compendium of Etruscan inscriptions housed in the British Library.[29] Sigismondo's alphabet, like the one from

[27] *Introductio*, 205v–206r.

[28] On Sigismondo, see Lodone, 'Tizio, Sigismondo', https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sigismondo-tizio_(Dizionario-Biografico)/, accessed 8 March 2025; and Martelli, 'L'ambiente e l'influenza di Sigismondo Tizio', 120–126.

[29] Sloane 3524, 60r. See Danielsson, 'Etruskische Inschriften', 55–83. The alphabets in Giambullari (1546) and Marmocchini are found on fols. 45 and 5v, respectively. For a brief

Vettori's collection, is indeed considerably more 'accurate and faithful' than that of Teseo Ambrogio. Sigismondo includes many additional letters, with five different characters for *A* and *S*, and four each for *T* and *P*. Fourteen characters are more-or-less accurate, and an additional ten characters are true Etruscan letters but assigned to the wrong Latin letter. The author of the Munich alphabet does not mirror Sigismondo exactly; for example, he omits two of Sigismondo's translations of *A*, *L*, *M*, and *R*, while adding characters for *B*, *C*, *G*, *H*, and *I* to those transcribed from Sigismondo. Given that variations of the same alphabet appear in several other manuscripts of the period, the anonymous epigrapher was surely not working with Sigismondo's text directly but with one of the many versions ultimately derived from it. In fact, the Munich alphabet is closer to Marmocchini's, revealing the same deviations from Sigismondo's original. This might suggest that Vettori was not only Giambullari's source but also Marmocchini's.[30]

The authors of these documents have not been identified, but Vettori had a wide network and was in regular communication with scholars in Rome and elsewhere concerning his philological studies. One is tempted to ascribe them to someone in the circle of Cardinal Marcello Cervini, later Pope Marcellus II, who is known to have corresponded with Vettori about Etruscan antiquities and the Etruscan language. In an often-cited letter dated 20 January 1554, Vettori

analysis of the study of the Etruscan alphabet in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Buonamici, *Epigrafia etrusca*, 23–32, with illustrations.

[30] As indeed Prosdocimi, in his discussion of Renaissance studies of the Etruscan alphabet, suspected but could not verify since he did not know Vettori's alphabet; see Prosdocimi, *Le Tavole Iguvine*, 1:56.

wrote to Cervini about the *Chimera*, a famous Etruscan bronze that had been discovered in Arezzo a few months before (**Fig. 10**). Vettori notes that he had sent Cervini a letter the previous week, in which he 'narrated how [he] had seen the artifact of Arezzo, and [he] described the form of that lion, or monster, as they call it'. He informs the cardinal that efforts were being made to identify its subject: 'There are those who say it represents the Chimera', he writes, 'but I neither affirm nor negate this', observing that the work matches the Chimera as described by neither Hesiod nor Homer. He asks Cervini to send word of other opinions: 'I'd very much like to know what the learned men in Rome think of it'.[31]

This passage about the *Chimera* is just one example of the two men's discussions about Etruscan topics. In the same letter, Vettori asks the cardinal if he had received another, earlier missive, which he had sent along with a letter to the humanist Gabriele Faerno of Cremona (1510–1561), in which he had shared his thoughts about the Etruscan language. Cervini had in fact already penned a reply. In a missive dated 30 December, he noted that he 'received [Vettori's letter] of the 23rd of this month with the note about the antiquities found in Arezzo, but the other one you say you wrote to me with the same news hasn't appeared'.[32] Cervini was himself interested in the Etruscan language and urged his friend to share further news about Etruscan inscriptions that Vettori had shared: 'since the letters that are in that notice seem to me to be Etruscan, I would very much like to know if any of the learned men there have deciphered

[31] Ghinassi, *Lettere di Piero Vettori*, letter IV, 36–39.

[32] London, BL, Add. 10274, no. 71, Cervini in Rome to Vettori, 30 December 1553: 'ho ricevuta la vostra de 23 del presente, con la nota di anticaglie trovate in Arezzo. L'alt[r]a, quali citate havermi scritta con la medes[sim]a nota, no[n] è comparsa'.

them'.[33] Cervini wrote to Vettori again about the Chimera on 20 January 1554, stating, 'I had already seen the drawing of the lion found in Arezzo, but your description of that artifact, so beautiful and rare, has nevertheless given me great pleasure'.[34] A month after this, Vettori again wrote to Cervini, this time about some antiquities discovered at Volterra, a Tuscan city that had long been understood to have Etruscan roots. On March 3, Cervini replied, 'Yesterday I received your letter … with the form of the medals found in Volterra, and with a letter addressed to Faerno, which I sent to him. The urns are clearly very ancient, and if you or anyone else can interpret the Etruscan script, it would be a very good thing to know'.[35]

Returning to the Etruscan alphabet in Munich from Vettori's collection, the author states that it was sent to him 'from Moltepulciano', the ancestral home of the Cervini family and where

[33] London, BL, Add. 10274, no. 71, Cervini in Rome to Vettori, 30 December 1553: 'Et perche le l[etter]e, che sono in detta nota mi paiono etrusche, harei caro di sapere se hoggi da alcuno son intese'.

[34] London, BL, Add. 10274, no. 73, Cervini in Rome to Vettori, 20 January 1554: 'Se bene havevo veduto il ritratto dipinto del leone trovato in Arezzo; m'e stata pero molto grata in particolar descrittione vostra di quella anticaglia cosi bella et rara'. Trascribed in Census of Antique Works known in the Renaissance, CensusID 52387, https://database.census.de/detail/52387, accessed 7 March 2025.

[35] London, BL, Add. 10274, 79r: 'Hieri ricevai la vostra de[l] 24 del passato con la forma del[le]e medaglie trovate in Volterra, et con una l[ete]ra che andava al Faerno quale gli mandai. Quanto alle sepolture si vede ch'elle son molto antiche, et se voi o altri intendesse quelle l[ette]re etrusche, sarebbe una bella cognitione'.

Marcello spent many years.[36] Additionally, evidence that Cervini himself compiled Etruscan alphabets is preserved in Lansdowne 720, a manuscript in the British Library. Written in French and Latin, the document is entitled 'Voyage d'Italie', and, according to the catalogue of the collection, it was compiled between 1574 and 1578 by 'some very learned and intelligent Frenchman'.[37] It records the author's experience with various monuments encountered during his travels in Italy. In it we encounter a page with a Chinese alphabet, at the top of which the unnamed epigrapher states it was copied in the Vatican Library from a document written 'by the hand of Pope Marcellus'. Two Etruscan alphabets immediately follow on the next pages (**Figs. 11 and 12**). While their source not given, it seems that reference to Cervini above the Chinese alphabet was intended to refer to the whole section on alphabets, since elsewhere in the text the author generally gives the sources from which his notes are drawn. The two Etruscan alphabets are nearly the same but arranged in a different order and follow the model of Sigismondo Tizio, like the alphabet sent to Vettori.

These letters, together with the sheets in Munich, present a clear picture of Vettori's interests as an antiquarian, suggesting a scholar who examined the physical appearance of Etruscan artifacts and who also, in dialogue with Cervini, Faerno, and perhaps others, earnestly wished to interpret the Etruscan language and alphabet. Vettori's work in the nascent field of Etruscology was not, therefore, directed exclusively at aggrandizing his homeland or at serving Cosimo's cultural politics. Vettori's Etruscan studies were both wide-ranging and sustained over many years, reflecting a sincere interest in the history, artifacts, alphabet, and language of ancient

[36] Sachet, *Publishing for the Popes*, 49.

[37] *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts*, part 2, 163, no. 720.

Etruria. Although overshadowed by his philological work, Vettori's Etruscan studies were a significant early episode in the nascent Etruscology of Renaissance Italy.

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**Captions [credits forthcoming after all permissions have been granted]**

Figure 1. Table IV of the Eugubine Tables. Civic Museum, Gubbio.

Figure 2. Letter to Cardinal Francesco Soderini, 10 February 1508, as transcribed in the Codex Pighianus. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Manuscript Department, MS Lat. fol. 61, fol. 55v.

Figure 3. Copy of drawings sent from Marcello Virgilio Adriani to Francesco Soderini, 1508. *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae, saec. XVI et XVII maximam partem per Italiam in usum Victoriorum collectae*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, MS CLM 743, fol. 1v.

Figure 4. Copy of inscriptions sent from Marcello Virgilio Adriani to Francesco Soderini, 1508. *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae, saec. XVI et XVII maximam partem per Italiam in usum Victoriorum collectae*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, MS CLM 743, fol. 2r.

Figure 5. Etruscan alphabet and inscriptions. *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae, saec. XVI et XVII maximam partem per Italiam in usum Victoriorum collectae*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, MS CLM 743, fol. 1bis recto.

Figure 6. Notes on the Etruscan language. *Inscriptiones tam latinae quam graecae, saec. XVI et XVII maximam partem per Italiam in usum Victoriorum collectae*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, MS CLM 743, fol. 1bis verso.

Figure 7. Etruscan alphabet from Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi, *Introductio in Chaldaicam linguam*, 1539, 205v.

Figure 8. Etruscan alphabet from Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi, *Introductio in Chaldaicam linguam*, 1539, 206r.

Figure 9. Etruscan alphabet from Sigismondo Tizio, *Historiae Senenses*, BAV Chis. G. I. 35, fol. 33r. Published in Sigismondo Tizio, *Historiae Senenses*, ed. Manuela Doni Garfagnini, vol. 1, bk. 1, pt. 1, p. 49. [rights pending]

Figure 10. *Chimera of Arezzo*. Museo Archeologico, Florence. Photograph provided by Art Resource. [rights pending]

Figure 11. Etruscan alphabet. British Library, MS Lansdowne 720, 279v.

Figure 12. Etruscan alphabet. British Library, MS Lansdowne 720, 280r.