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Etruscan sculpture,
520 BC

[An Over 2,000-Year-Old Etruscan Tomb Found Intact](#)

In Tuscany, Italy

They are still perhaps the most mysterious civilization of the ancient Europe. Could a newly found tomb solve a part of the puzzle? Archaeologists have found an over 2,000-year-old Etruscan tomb perfectly preserved in Tuscany, with a treasure trove of artifacts and the urns keeping the remains of about 30 people. The tomb was discovered in the Tuscan town of Civitella Paganico and probably dates from the 1st - 3rd centuries B.C., when the Etruscan power was in decline and they were considered part of the Roman empire. "It's quite rare to find a tomb intact like this," lead archaeologist Andrea Marcocci told Reuters. He had suspected the existence of an Etruscan settlement in the area after working on scattered pieces of artifacts, found on a nearby road. "When we found fragments outside, we thought we would find that the tomb had been violated. But the main burial room was completely intact. Inside the tomb, a narrow corridor led to a small burial chamber, about 6.5 ft (2 m) long and 6 ft (1.79 m) wide. It housed about 80 objects, including vases and mirrors in bronze and ceramic. Urns holding human remains were also found," he said. "It's quite exceptional to find so many objects in a tomb so small. Some of the vases (urns) were fairly small, so we think they were probably for children." The Etruscans lived in the northern part of Rome in present-day regions of Tuscany (whose name comes from "Tuscans" Etruscans) and Umbria. Their civilization rapidly appeared and reached its peak from the 7th to the 6th century B.C., when they dominated early Rome (which they seem to have found it), but later were conquered by the Romans. Much of what is known about their civilization comes from other lavish burial sites. The Etruscan mystery is in connection to their unknown origin: where did they come from and what language did they speak? Herodotus, the Greek historian of the 5th century BC, said that Etruscans came from Lydia, an ancient kingdom from present-day Turkey. Indeed, tombs discovered in ancient Lydia are extremely similar to those of the Etruscans. A recent DNA analysis showed that cattle in central Italy seem indeed to have originated in modern Turkey and Middle East. As there is no link between these cattle and others from other European regions, they must have entered the peninsula by sea. The legend of Rome's foundation points to the Lydian theory: they were survivors of the Troy war and Troy was located on the Asia Minor, inside the Lydian territory. But the Lydian theory has a weak point: the Lydian language was Indo-European. What is certain is that the Etruscans were registered by history as appearing around 800-750 BC in Tuscany. The name of the Tyrrhenian Sea could also have Etruscan roots. In fact, Etruscans were not only farmers, but also skilled sailors, who traded with the Greeks and Cartagena. The God of the Sea, Neptunus, was important in their religion. The sailing abilities support not only the Lydian theory, but also that of the "People of the Sea", seafaring raiders that were at war with the Egyptians in the 12th century BC. Their civilization was centered in Crete (now an island in southern Greece) and this people spoke a non-Indo-European language. There are significantly increasing proofs that match the Crete and Minoan civilization to Atlantis and its decline to a huge ancient tsunami. Etruscans were good riders and maintained a well-instructed army, but Romans conquered their city-states one by one between 358-265 BC. These city-states were at war themselves and this lack of unity eased the Roman conquest. In 87 BC the Etruscans were given the same rights as the Romans and this led to their assimilation. There are over 10,000 Etruscan inscriptions known by now, most of them short. But except about 200 words known to be human names, the meaning of the others is hard to decode. A paradoxical thing is that their language is very easy to read, as they borrowed and adapted the Greek alphabet in the eighth-seventh centuries BC, but it is almost impossible to understand their

texts. Their language seems not to belong to any known group (enhancing the link to the Minoan civilization).