

**LOCAL PRIDE, ETHNICITY AND ANCIENT HISTORY IN TURIN IN THE RISORGIMENTO: THE  
REPRESENTATION OF THE TAURISCI/TAURINI IN CARLO PROMIS’  
*STORIA DELL’ANTICA TORINO* (1869)**

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Carlo Promis (1808-1873), architect, archaeologist, epigraphist and historian, was one of the dominating figures in the intellectual life of Turin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Educated in the tradition of the antiquarian studies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Promis developed early contacts with the German academic world, in which the modern *Altertumswissenschaften* were emerging, and represents the moment of passage between two generations of scholars of the ancient world. Corresponding member of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut since 1836, Ispettore dei Monumenti di Antichità nei Regi Stati (a new position created for him) since 1837, Royal Archaeologist (another new title introduced only for him) since 1839, member of the Accademia delle Scienze di Torino since 1842, Promis is mostly famous for having been the main reference person in Turin for Theodor Mommsen during the realization of *CIL V*. Promis was a relevant figure not only of the intellectual, but also of the political life of that period in Turin – city counsellor for many years, he refused to become deputy and then senator, but was very near to king Carlo Alberto, of whom he edited, leaving them anonymous the memoirs concerning the war of 1848-1849. The years of his life and activity are indeed the same in which, through the Independence Wars (1848-1849, 1860-1861), the kingdom of Sardinia transformed into the new Kingdom of Italy, and Turin, the first capital of the new State, was abandoned by the court for Florence (1864) and then Rome (1870). In this chapter, I will concentrate on the representation of the pre-Roman inhabitants of Piedmont in his most important work, the *Storia dell’Antica Torino*, published in 1869, a few years after the achievement of the Italian unification and after the city had lost its role as capital. The pages dedicated to the Taurisci/Taurini, represented by Promis as Celtic Illyrians who migrated into the Po Valley, historical enemies of the Etruscans and the Gauls and traditional allies of the Romans, but in the end betrayed by these in the moment of the Hannibalic War, will be analyzed against both the political context of the Risorgimento, in particular as seen from the city of Turin, and the cultural background of the studies of the pre-Roman populations of Italy during that period. In particular, I aim to show that the portrait of Promis as an intellectual faithfully devoted to the ideals of the Risorgimento and to the unitary interpretations of Italian history, always interpreting in this “Italian” perspective the connections of the local and the Roman history is wrong, and has been artificially created after his death. His representation of the Roman betrayal, as his insistence on the enmity between Taurini, Etruscans and Gauls, as well as his recurrent mentioning the natural and historical unity of Piedmont including Nizza and Savoy, ceded to France in 1860 in exchange for its help in achieving the unity of Italy, do say something very different, and make the perspective of local pride a much more useful tool in understanding Promis’ outstanding role in shaping the ancient history of

Turin and Piedmont. In this way, I aim to show how the history of the pre-Roman peoples of Italy can be used to argue that absolutely not the entire elite of Turin, and not even the entire group of families strongly bound to the Savoy family, were staying compactly behind Vittorio Emanuele II and Cavour and their project of Italian unification.