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# ACTA HYPERBOREA

16

*Approaches to Ancient Etruria*

Mette Moltesen & Annette Rathje (eds.)

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# SAN GIOVENALE

## A TERRAMARE FOUNDATION

LARS KARLSSON

This article was inspired by Andrea Cardarelli's ideas around the Terramare culture.<sup>1</sup> The discussion is here taken further to suggest that the Terramare movement is Etruscan, that Protovillanovan San Giovenale was a Terramare foundation and thus part of a Pelasgian "diaspora", as described by Dionysios of Halikarnassos.

The Swedish excavations at the two Etruscan sites of San Giovenale and Luni sul Mignone produced a sensational type of pottery, which was very early identified as Protovillanovan.<sup>2</sup> The Swedish archaeologists considered this facies to be part of the Iron Age, as it was discovered immediately under the Archaic levels. During my work with the material from Area F East at San Giovenale, I have been able to distinguish a more comprehensive stratigraphy of the archaeological levels at San Giovenale (Area F). The stratigraphic layers can be described in the following way:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) On top one finds a thin, mixed layer of top soil containing Hellenistic and later pottery;
- (2) Below is the significant Archaic level with ashlar-built square houses with terracotta roofs and developed bucchero (ca. 625–550/30 BC);
- (3) Below is the Orientalizing period with buccheroid impasto, some very fine bucchero *sottile* pieces, spiral amphorae, and a square house built with wattle-and-daub walls and a mud roof. This is the period of the Capanna tomb in Cerveteri (ca. 675–625 BC).
- (4) Below is a level of roundish huts built with a stone socle. Connected with these is pottery of the type called Brown Impasto in the San Giovenale publications. It should belong in the second half of the 8th century BC. There is really no Villanovan pottery from San Giovenale, even though a few pieces could be interpreted in this way.<sup>4</sup>

- (5) Below, and mixed with all later strata, is a very large amount of Protovillanovan pottery. The many discovered huts are here built into channels cut in the tufa bedrock.<sup>5</sup>

The large amount of Protovillanovan pottery from San Giovenale surprised the excavators.<sup>6</sup> Since this type of pottery was not so well known at the time, the Swedish archaeologists were slow in publishing the material. Fortunately, the excavations were well conducted and all pottery was saved in many hundreds of boxes at the Swedish Institute in Rome (nowadays in storage rooms in Blera). Since this time, Italian archaeologists have been working on Protovillanovan material from other sites and have concluded that this facies belongs to the Bronze Age. During my work with the Area F East, I was able to C14-date two preserved charcoal fragments taken from the large hearth discovered in Oval Hut I.<sup>7</sup> At this level, the excavator Arne Furumark collected pieces “from vessels standing along the inner wall of the hut”.<sup>8</sup> Furumark believed that this hut had been deserted abruptly or violently destroyed.<sup>9</sup> The C14 dates were 1510–1110 BC and 1500–1310 BC, both with 95.4% confidence. Thus pottery of the Protovillanovan culture belongs to the Bronze Age, also at San Giovenale, and more specifically it seems to be the Recent Bronze Age (*bronzo recente*), dated ca. 1350/1300–1150 BC. A small Mycenaean sherd was also found.<sup>10</sup>

Another surprising fact was that remains (i.e. cut channels and post holes) from Protovillanovan huts were discovered all over the plateau of the so-called Acropolis. This suggests that the Protovillanovan settlement at San Giovenale must have been very substantial and extensive. However, a limited part of San Giovenale was settled earlier, with a concentration around the 13th century AD castle.<sup>11</sup> It thus seems a possibility that the extensive Protovillanovan settlement at San Giovenale was very much like a colony, a foundation *ex novo*.

### *Dionysios of Halikarnassos*

If the Protovillanovan settlement at San Giovenale is a new foundation, from where did the settlers come? In a 2009 article, Andrea Cardarelli connected the north Italian Terramare culture with a people called the Pelasgians, known from ancient sources to be a pre-Greek people in Greece and western Anatolia. According to Cardarelli, the Terramare culture in Italy arose in the Middle Bronze Age I (ca. 1650–1550 B),<sup>12</sup> and disappeared



rather abruptly in the 12th century, at about the passage from the Recent Bronze Age to the Final Bronze Age. Cardarelli connects this abrupt end of the Terramare culture with the incredible story told by Dionysios of Halikarnassos of the crisis that befell the Pelasgians two generations before the Trojan War (thus about 1250 BC). The ancient historian, who wrote at the time of Augustus, came from Karia in Anatolia, as did his predecessor Herodotos of Halikarnassos, so both of them originated from an area not so remote from a suggested Pelasgian 'homeland'. Dionysios says that the Pelasgians came to Italy from Thessaly (1.89.1–2). They were expelled from Thessaly by the Greeks and landed at the mouth of the River Po. Even though Dionysios himself did not support the interpretation that the Pelasgians were Etruscans, both the historians Myrsilos of Methymna (ca. 250 BC) and Hellanikos from Mytilene (5th c. BC), believed that the Pelasgians were Tyrrhenians (Dion. 1.28.3 and 1.25.5),<sup>13</sup> the term Greek authors used for the Etruscans. In a long passage copied carefully in the work of Dionysios of Halikarnassos, Myrsilos of Methymna described what happened to the Pelasgians after they had migrated from Greece to Italy:

*The Pelasgians, after conquering a large and fertile region, taking over many towns and building others, made great and rapid progress, becoming populous, rich and in every way prosperous. Nevertheless, they did not long enjoy their prosperity, but at the moment when they seemed to all the world to be in the most flourishing condition they were visited by divine wrath (1.23.1).*

*The first cause of desolation of their cities seemed to be a drought which laid waste their land, when neither fruit remained on the trees till it was ripe, but dropped while still green, nor did such of the seed corn as sent up shoots and flowered stand for the usual period till the ear was ripe, nor did sufficient grass grow for cattle; and of the waters some were no longer fit to drink, others shrank during the summer, and others were totally dried up (1.23.2).*

*The rest of the people, also, particularly those in the prime of life, were afflicted with many unusual diseases and uncommon deaths (1.23.3).*

*For the Pelasgians in a time of general scarcity in the land had vowed to offer to Jupiter, Apollo and the Cabeiri tithes of all their future increase (1.23.5).*

*The time when the calamities of the Pelasgians began was about the second generation before the Trojan War; and they continued to occur even after the war, till the nation was reduced to very inconsiderable numbers. For, with the exception of Croton, the important city in Umbria, and any others that they had founded in the land of the Aborigines, all the rest of the Pelasgian cities were destroyed (I.26.1).*

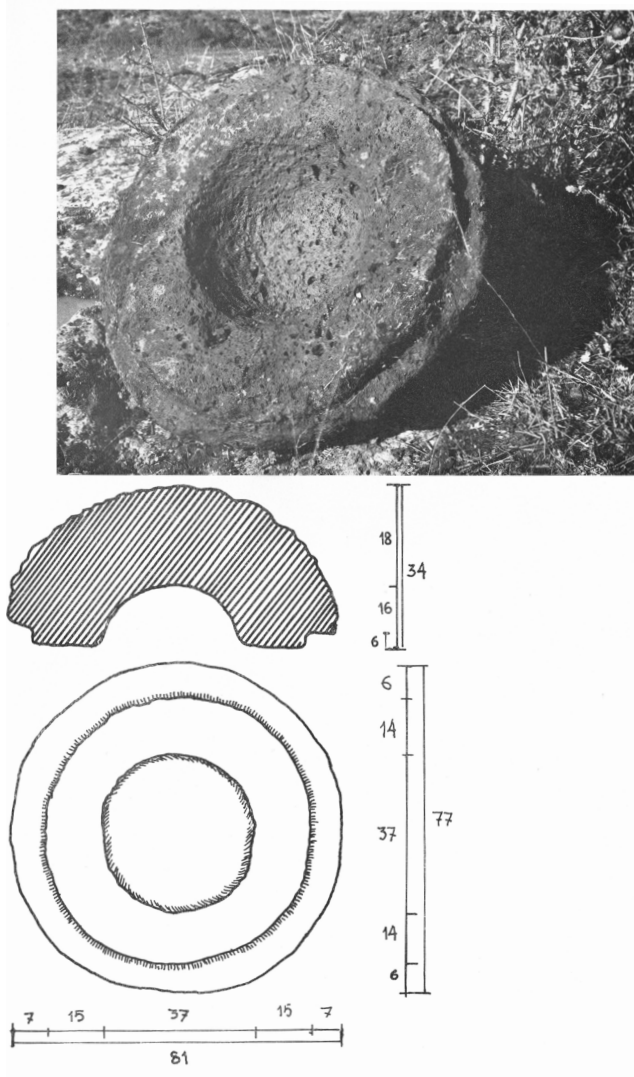
These passages from Dionysios of Halikarnassos are very interesting and informative. One wonders if the natural disasters described by him were also the ones that caused the downfall of the Mycenaean civilization and Troy. What is the evidence for the suggestion that the 'Italian' Etruscan-speaking people were related to the Pelasgians, known from Greece? In an article from 2001, the Italian scholar G. M. Facchetti has suggested that the language on the Linear A tablets, known from Crete and the Aegean area, is proto-Etruscan.<sup>14</sup> We know that the Etruscan language was spoken on Lemnos down into the Classical period, and place names on Crete have parallels in Etruria, for example Croton (Cortona)–Gortyn.<sup>15</sup> Here I would like to add the place name Larissa or Larisa, which can be found both in Thessaly and in Aeolis in Anatolia, areas where, according to ancient sources, Etruscan-speaking people lived.<sup>16</sup> I suggest that this place name must come from Laris/Larth, which is possibly the most common male name in Etruscan society. This cannot be a coincidence. In this context, it is interesting that Dionysios writes that the Pelasgians sacrificed to the Kabeiroi.<sup>17</sup> The Kabeiroi were worshipped at Samothrace, where pre-Greek graffiti have been discovered. Is this language also Etruscan? One myth says that the Kabeiroi were twins who helped their father Hephaistos in his metalworking shop on Lemnos, where there was also a Kabeiroi sanctuary and where perhaps the Etruscan language was spoken. The connection with metalworking in this cult is interesting as the excavations of Terramare settlements produce a large amount of metal artefacts<sup>18</sup> – not to mention the skill of the later Etruscans in metalworking.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Helmut Rix has been able to prove that inscriptions in the southern Alpine region are written in an Etruscan language, confirming Pliny's statement that the Rhaetians were Etruscans.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, modern DNA analyses have indicated that Etruscan DNA is closely related to that of modern-day Turks.<sup>21</sup>

*Terramare – San Giovenale*

An important part of the Terramare culture is the practice of cremation in biconical jars of various sizes. Although, as has been pointed out, some Terramare cemeteries include inhumation graves, the majority contain cinerary urns.<sup>22</sup> This cultural practice is a break from an earlier Bronze Age inhumation tradition. Around San Giovenale, surprisingly, and in spite of a very extensive archaeological inventory research, only seven tombs of a pozzo type were discovered, four of them in the Porzarago necropolis.<sup>23</sup> Tomb 1 contained three biconical jars, of which one had a lid in the shape of a bowl and one was decorated with four parallel zigzag lines and dimples (**Fig. 1**).<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Tomb 1 also contained a stone lid of the tomb cut in tufa, which was placed on a cut shelf in the grave pit (**Fig. 2**).<sup>25</sup> These tombs must belong to the Protovillanovan settlement on the Acropolis, because of the shape of the cinerary urn and its zigzag decoration.



**Fig. 1** Protovillanovan cinerary biconical jars from San Giovenale Porzarago necropolis. (After *San Giovenale* 1:5, pl. IV).



**Fig. 2** Tufa lid of a Protovillanovan tomb from San Giovenale Porzarago necropolis. (After *San Giovenale* 1:5, pl. III).

### *The Protovillanovan pottery*

The most characteristic feature of San Giovenale pottery is the very rich, so-called primitive impasto ware. However, the pottery is not primitive; rather, it is made from a very good and fairly compact clay with some inclusions of black mica and white specks. The firing technique produced a pottery

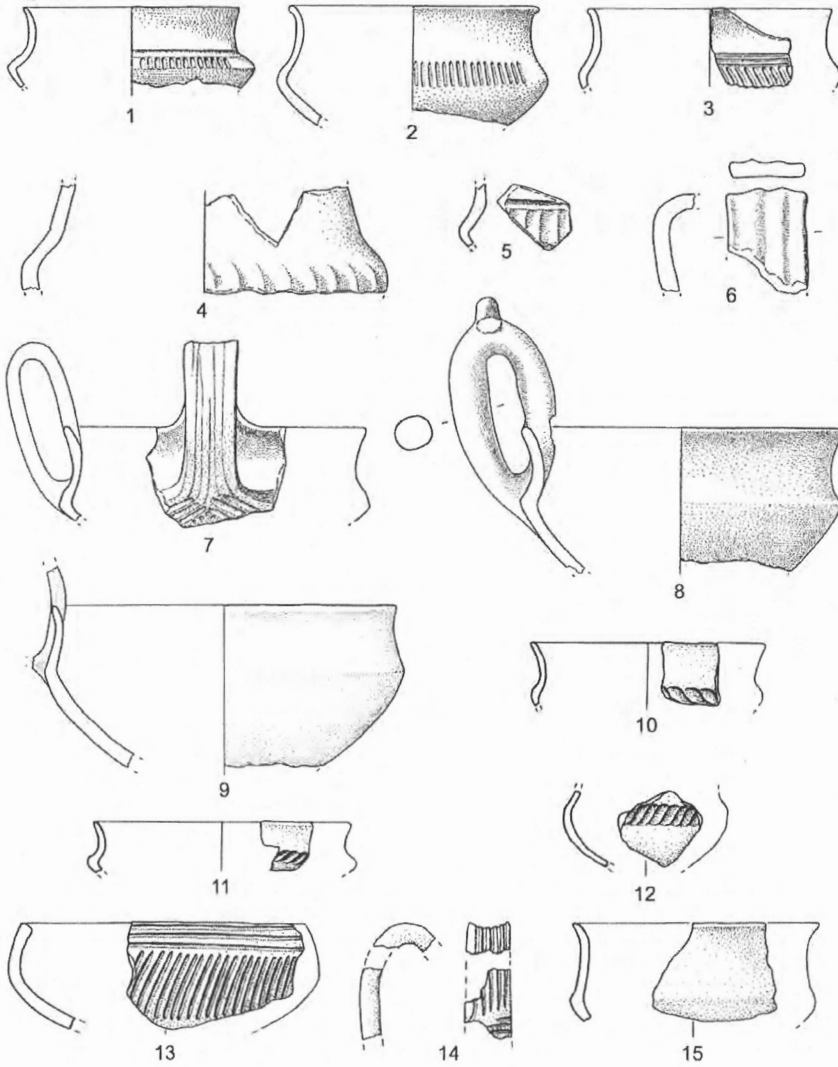
that varied in both colour and hardness. The colour goes from a brick-red through olive green to brown or black, sometimes with yellowish-brown patches. The surface is always very well burnished.<sup>26</sup>

The Protovillanovan pottery also has very characteristic shapes. The largest shape is the biconical jar. The second largest shape is the “oval-cylindrical jar”, which regularly has a band running around the neck, often with impressions to resemble a cordon but also just smooth. The most common shape is the carinated cup or bowl. The carination is very much the hallmark of Protovillanovan pottery. The projecting *carina* develops from a very sharp angle in the earliest phase to a more rounded profile, probably in order to make room for more decorative fluting.<sup>27</sup> These bowls can have a high handle with a zoomorphic apex.

In his 2009 article, Cardarelli gathered examples of pottery shapes from the Terramare culture found at sites in northern Tuscany (**Fig. 3**: Fossa Nera di Porcari, Lucca). As can be seen from his examples, the cups have a sharp *carina* decorated with short parallel lines, or longer flutes often placed obliquely. Cardarelli writes: “Various types of bowl with distinct necks, often decorated with wide, vertical or oblique grooves on the shoulders or body, are recurrent in this phase; they have raised, vertical handles, either flat or round in section, and are often decorated with horizontal or oblique grooves or ribs.”<sup>28</sup> The cups are extremely similar to examples from San Giovenale (**Fig. 4**) and even Luni sul Mignone.<sup>29</sup> I argue here that the archaeological evidence suggests a connection between the Terramare culture and the sites with Protovillanovan pottery in central Italy. Already Luigi Pigorini argued for a similar connection in 1895 (although his reference is to the Villanovan phase): “...the inhabitants of the Terramare and the lake-dwellings in the East and the Veneto are just as Italic as those to whom the tombs of the Villanovan type belong. Between one and the other the only difference is that the former lived in the Bronze Age and the latter in the early Iron Age. The Italic peoples of the Villanova period did not therefore descend from nowhere to occupy the lands of the Terramare dwellers, but are themselves ‘Terramareans’ in a phase of civilization less ancient and more advanced.”<sup>30</sup>

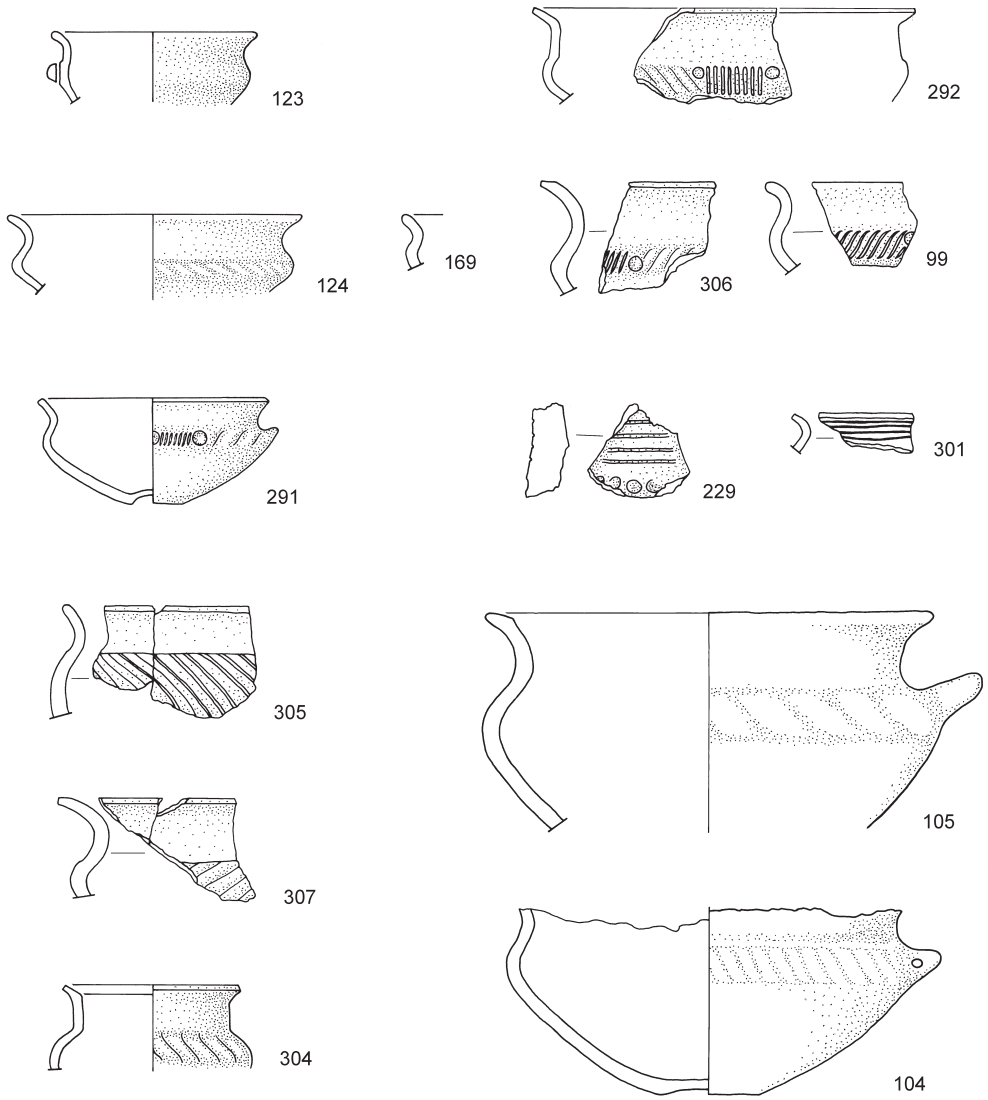
Cardarelli linked the success of the Terramare culture to the spreading of the Pelasgians, as described by Dionysios of Halikarnassos. It is my belief that this scenario could well describe the historic development of the Pelasgians/Etruscans in Italy and the coming of the later Etruscan

culture (we know them as Etruscans only with the invention of the script). The Terramare culture, with its characteristic biconical urns and decorated carinated cups, seems to have established itself on sites that often were not



**Fig. 3** Cups from the Recent Bronze Age site of Fossa Nera di Porcari, Lucca, Tuscany. (After Cardarelli 2009, 495, fig. 15).

occupied by the Apennine Bronze Age culture. Even though fragments from the Apennine Bronze Age were discovered below and west of the castle at San Giovenale,<sup>31</sup> most of the plateau must have been uninhabited.



**Fig. 4** Protovillanova cups from San Giovenale, Area F East. (After *San Giovenale* IV:I, pl. 4).



According to P. G. Gierow, the Apennine settlement was destroyed in a fire.<sup>32</sup> Did the arrival of the Terramare people cause a destruction of the probably very small, pre-existing settlement?

The Terramare settlement at San Giovenale spread out over the entire plateau, but it seems to have been abandoned and possibly violently destroyed. The destruction could well have happened around/shortly after the Trojan War, as suggested by Dionysios. It is important to observe that there is no Villanovan development at San Giovenale, nor at Luni. Instead, the Villanovan culture developed at new sites,<sup>33</sup> for example Tarquinia, Cerveteri, and the nearby San Giuliano site.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, from these Villanovan sites very little has been reported concerning Protovillanovan levels.

San Giovenale was uninhabited between about the 12th century down to about the second half of the 8th century. One of the reasons why the early Swedish archaeologists believed that the Protovillanova pottery was Iron Age was that the soil layers were so thin, and the Archaic level seemed to rest directly on top of the Protovillanovan hut face. Could the extreme weather conditions around the Trojan War, so vividly described by Dionysios, have been responsible for the thin soil layer between the Bronze Age and the Archaic periods?

To conclude, recent research and ideas have shed new light on the early history of the Etruscans. The suggestion by Facchetti that Linear A was written in an early Etruscan language, and the inscriptions reported from Lemnos and the Rhaetian region indicate that the Etruscans inhabited an area stretching from western Asia Minor to the south Alpine region. It is likely that the pre-Indoeuropean Etruscans lived in this area before the coming of the Greeks, as is indicated in Greek sources about the Pelasgians. Most ancient authors agree that the Pelasgians were the same people as the later Tyrrhenians. In the long passage by Myrsilos quoted in the work of Dionysios of Halikarnassos, the Pelasgians are described as being thrown out by the Greeks and settling in northeastern Italy. Although Dionysios does not accept the connection between the Pelasgians and the Etruscans, his source, Myrsilos of Methymna, does indeed say that they are the same people. Cardarelli's application of this story to the development of the Terramare culture seems very convincing. The Terramare developed in northeastern Italy from the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1650 BC) and disappears around the break between the Recent and Final Bronze Ages (around 1150



BC). The pottery produced by the Terramare culture is very similar to that of the Protovillanovans, as is their cremation burials in biconical jars. The suggestion put forward here is that the Terramare develops into the Protovillanovan culture and as such is an Etruscan culture. The spreading of the Pelasgian people and the creation of many new settlements in central Italy (among the aborigines, as Dionysios writes) is the background to the foundation of Protovillanovan San Giovenale. CI4 dates from San Giovenale in the 13th century BC indicate that the settlement at San Giovenale goes back to this period. The end of San Giovenale probably came in the 12th century BC, possibly through a violent destruction or sudden abandonment, as Furumark suggested when he excavated the pots standing *in situ* in the Protovillanovan hut in Area F East in S Giovenale.

## NOTES

- 1 See Cardarelli 2009; for a further discussion on the Terramare 'diaspora', see Bettelli, Cardarelli & Damiani 2018.
- 2 See the conference volume *San Giovenale. Materiali e problemi*. For Luni, see *Luni sul Mignone* II:1 and II:2. The term Protovillanova was created as an initial phase of the Villanova culture, on the model of Proto-geometric compared to the Geometric period in Greece. The name Villanova was coined in 1853 when a large necropolis outside of Bologna was discovered. It contained biconical jars with burnt bones, indicating a new cremation culture older than the then known Archaic Etruscan culture. The Protovillanovan culture is characterized by similar but simpler biconical cinerary urns with similar but less intricate incised lines.
- 3 See San Giovenale IV:1, 140.
- 4 See *San Giovenale* IV:1, 125. These fragments were decorated with thin impressed cord lines, common in the Villanova period but they can appear in the Protovillanovan repertoire also. The interpretation of these few fragments as Villanovan is thus very uncertain.
- 5 For the huts, see Karlsson 2017.
- 6 From only Area F East, I processed 8,465 Protovillanova sherds – 31% of all the pottery found at the site!
- 7 See *San Giovenale* IV:1, 141, fig. 265.
- 8 *San Giovenale* IV:1, 140.
- 9 This is also argued by Bengt Malcus who excavated the best-preserved Protovillanovan huts in Area D. He writes: "Le capanne sono state deteriorate o distrutte dal fuoco o da altri agenti;" Malcus 1984, 38; also Malcus 1979.
- 10 Malcus 1984, 45. In trench 3, "purtroppo in un contesto mal definito". The fragment was dated by Arne Furumark to LH IIIB2–LH IIIC1 (a–b).
- 11 This was probably the site of the earliest settlement as it has the best naturally protected location at San Giovenale, as is also evidenced by the large medieval castle on the spot; Gierow 1982. A few Middle Neolithic and Apennine Bronze Age fragments were reported by Gierow from the plateau, but most of the early evidence comes from under the castle.
- 12 Cardarelli 2009, 456.
- 13 Dionysios also says that Thukydides writes the following about the Thracian *Acta* and the cities situated on it (1.25.4): "There is also a Chalcidian element among them, but the largest element is Pelasgian, belonging to the Tyrrhenians, who once inhabited Lemnos and Athens."
- 14 Facchetti 2001.
- 15 Facchetti 2001, 22, n. 114. Croton in Umbria was also mentioned as Pelasgian by Diony-

- sios of Halikarnassos. For the Lemnos stele, see Agostiniani 1986; moreover, other graffiti in Etruscan have been found on Lemnos.
- 16 The connections between Larisa in Aeolis and the Etruscans were obviously strong down into the Archaic period. The Swedish (and later German) excavations at Larisa revealed architectural terracottas with scenes of symposia strongly reminiscent of the Acquarossa terracottas. For a connection between Anatolia and Etruria, due to refugee artists, see Winter 2017. The connection can also be seen in the earliest prototype of an Aeolic (Ionic) capital that was found in Larisa, and a similar type in the 6th-century *Tomba dei capitelli* in Cerveteri; see *Larisa am Hermos* II, 66–67 and pl. 27 (Fries VII), and Ciasca 1962. Both Aeolian Larisa and Lemnos are called Pelasgian by Strabo 5.2.4. Another eastward-pointing fact is the curious name of the city Tarquinia/*Tarchna*, probably related in some way to the name of Jupiter in west Anatolian languages: *Trq̥nt* in Lycian and Karian and *Tarhunt* in Luwian. The Etruscan name of Jupiter was Tin/Tinia.
  - 17 The Kabeiroi were believed to have originated from Mount Kabeiroi in Phrygia.
  - 18 Cardarelli 2009, 452 writes: “The abundance of bronze objects, moulds for casting and frequent traces of metalwork processes suggest the likely presence, in most villages, of a resident skilled smith.”
  - 19 The Archaic structures on the Borgo (Work Area Ac) at San Giovenale were certainly part of a metalworking quarter (*San Giovenale* V:1, 94f.). Quite possibly the Protovillanovan settlement at San Giovenale (as I suggest, founded by a Terramare group of people) was also in search of metal.
  - 20 Rix 1998; Pliny, *NH* 3.24.
  - 21 Perkins 2017, 111. Here one should understand ‘inhabitants in Anatolia’, since the genetic pool in Anatolia preserves large pre-Turkic groups of people.
  - 22 Cardarelli 2009, 453.
  - 23 Gierow 1987, 27.
  - 24 *San Giovenale* I:5, 20–21 and plate IV:3. Tomb 2 contained only “a sherd of the ossuary and two small vases, while the third tomb was empty”.
  - 25 *San Giovenale* I:5, pl. III.
  - 26 *San Giovenale* IV:1, 119–120.
  - 27 *San Giovenale* IV:1, 122.
  - 28 Cardarelli 2009, 487–489.
  - 29 *Luni* II:1, figs. 22–26, 29–33; *Luni* II:2, pls. 64:11–14, 65:22–23, 71:162–182.
  - 30 Translation in Cardarelli 2009, 502, after Pigorini 1895.
  - 31 See Malcus 1984, 45.
  - 32 Gierow 1982, 19; also Nylander 1986, 37.
  - 33 Noticed by Francesco di Gennaro in 1983: “il passaggio dall’aspetto protovillanoviano a quello villanoviano corrisponda in genere, pur se non mancano eccezioni, ad un cambiamento delle sedi abitate”, in *San Giovenale. Materiali e problemi*, 98.
  - 34 Bonghi Jovino 2001 (Tarquinia); Brocato 1997 (San Giuliano).

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LAURA NAZIM graduated in Classical Archaeology at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. She has taken part in several archaeological excavations, and was a research assistant in the university museum in the department of ancient art. Currently, Laura Nazim is writing her PhD about the Etruscan stone sarcophagi of the Hellenistic period. Her research focuses on Etruscan art and culture with a specialization in grave contexts, burials and sarcophagi.

MARJATTA NIELSEN has studied archaeology, art history, anthropology and Roman literature at the University of Helsinki, and has been a member of research teams studying the last centuries of Etruscan civilization (Rome-Helsinki, 1967–1971; Lund, 2001–2003). She has participated in excavations in Italy and in exhibition projects and publications at Volterra (1985 and 2007) and Helsinki (2003). She has also been co-editor of *Acta Hyperborea*, and has given lectures on the Etruscans in European countries and worldwide. Her research comprises late Etruscan funerary sculpture, social issues such as family relations, women, couples and children, as well as research history and the reception of Antiquity. She is a foreign member of the *Istituto Nazionale di Studi Etruschi ed Italici*.

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