

Reviews

I. ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

J. TABOLLI, *NARCE TRA LA PRIMA ETÀ DEL FERRO E L'ORIENTALIZZANTE ANTICO: L'ABITATO, I TUFI E LA PETRINA* (Mediterranea Supplemento 9; Civiltà arcaica dei Sabini nella Valle del Tevere 4). Pisa: Fabrizio Serra editore, 2013. 2 vols: pp. 797, illus. ISBN 9788862276061. €1,485.00.

The site of Narce is best known from the splendid 1894 publication by Barnabei, Cozza, Pasqui and Gamurini of excavations in Faliscan territory (*Monumenti Antichi, Volume IV*). From 1889 onwards, these excavations furnished the first rooms of the Antiquities Museum in Rome, the still existing Villa Giulia. The recent publication by Jacopo Tabolli inevitably rests heavily on the original documentation of the excavations at Narce more than a century ago. But it also adds the results of recent archaeological research to provide a thorough reassessment of eighth-century B.C. Narce.

The Faliscan settlement of Narce, 9 km south of Civit  Castellana (ancient *Falerii Veteres*), is located on three steep-sided tuff-plateaux (Narce, Monte li Santi and Pizzo Piede). The settlement was surrounded by a number of burial grounds on adjacent small hills, the two best known of which (I Tufi and La Petrina) are presented by T. in detail. The plateaux were carved out of the tuff-bedrock by a number of streams that merge at Narce, of which the Treja (an affluent of the Tiber) is the most important. Narce was at the centre of an impressive network of roads and tracks, which gave access to Veii, Nepi, *Falerii Veteres*, Capena and other neighbouring settlements. Crustumerium, on the far side of the Tiber (www.Crusumerium.nl), is located just 20 km south-east of Narce, while Rome itself is c. 40 km to the south. Narce likely owed its prosperity to its position as a trading-post and essential way-station on the route to Etruscan Veii.

Findings indicate that Narce was occupied from the fourteenth century B.C. onwards (Apennine culture) into the Roman imperial period, with a gap in the archaeological record between c. 1000 and 800 B.C. (see below). Archaeological evidence for the whole Faliscan region is especially rich between the eighth and fourth centuries B.C. Grave goods include the typical impasto vessels of the eighth to fifth centuries B.C. and imports from Attica and Corinth as well as Faliscan red-figured pottery from the fourth and early third centuries B.C. The settlement at Narce included late archaic temples on the Pizzo Piede and west of the Monte li Santi, and there are further indications of another shrine south of the Monte li Santi; like many other centres in its vicinity, Narce thus obtained some urban characteristics during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. However, the necropoleis around Narce record the importance of the site in the eighth century B.C., and T.'s detailed publication is therefore an essential tool for understanding this crucial century of increased communication and exchange between the various communities inhabiting this multi-ethnic region of central Italy.

T.'s publication focuses on Narce from c. 780 to 670/650 B.C., the transition from Early Iron Age II into the Orientalising period, and is divided into two volumes. Volume I includes most of the text, divided into five chapters. The first two short chapters examine the history of excavations and the geomorphology of the region and settlement, based mainly on Mengarelli's excavation in 1933. More important are the catalogue of the tombs and finds in two of the cemeteries at Narce, La Petrina and I Tufi (ch. 3, covering 136 burial contexts), and the classifications and typologies of tombs and artefacts, including a seriation and chronology (ch. 4). Conclusions and six appendices follow, with mostly original documentation in the form of field journals. Volume II provides the figures and plates. The last plate (CXXXIII) offers a synopsis of research in the form of an association table of c. 90 tombs, divided into seven phases ranging from c. 800 to 650 B.C., most of which pertain to the eighth century.

The emphasis on primary data derives from a wider research programme on Faliscan territory at the Sapienza University (Rome), especially in relation to the nearby territory of Etruscan Veii, where excavations have proceeded for decades under the direction of the chair of Etruscan Studies. T. has drawn and examined over 1,700 objects, especially in the Museo Archeologico dell'Agro Falisco in Civita Castellana, the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia (Rome), the Museo Nazionale di

Preistorico – Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini” (Rome) and the Museo Nazionale Etrusco (Florence). In addition, he has investigated a number of archives for original documents, letters and drawings of the early excavations, including the Archives of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, where some tombs from Narce have been kept since 1897. A field survey in and around Narce in 2011 helped to improve both the cartography and our geophysical understanding of the burial grounds and settlement. Finally, an opportunity arose to do some stratigraphic excavations on the slope of La Petrina. As a consequence of this meticulous research, T. has even been able to provide information on what was lost in the decades around 1900, as a result of the provision of artefacts to the antiquarian market, robbing and sales abroad.

Three issues with T.’s publication are particularly worth raising. First is the afore-mentioned enigmatic break in the archaeological record at Narce between *c.* 1000 and 800 B.C. (pp. 33, 44–6, 59, 358 and n. 1780). However, Narce is not the only site in this region that reveals limited data on Early Iron Age I (*c.* 950–800 B.C.). There is hardly any archaeological record of the nearby Sabines during this phase, while Crustumerium also emerges around 825–800 B.C., as do many other settlement centres in this region. This quite sudden rise in archaeological visibility around 800 B.C. indicates, for me, a shift in deposition customs and material culture, rather than an actual *tabula rasa* for Early Iron Age I throughout the whole Faliscan territory and beyond. Burial of deceased persons in tombs only became common from *c.* 800 B.C. onwards, while prior to this date ritual deposition of corpses or cremated remains was unusual for many communities. At the same time, settlements were mainly constructed with organic materials, that are only rarely preserved. Furthermore, mounting archaeological evidence supports increased agricultural output and surplus production due to climate change in the ninth century B.C., with colder temperatures and increased rainfall supporting social-economic growth in many regions of the Mediterranean and beyond from the late ninth century B.C. onwards (see further below). Given the limited data relating to the ninth century B.C. at Narce, it is regrettable that T. dismisses the eleven ceramic cinerary urns depicted on figs I.37 and I.38 (photographs from the 1890s) as not certainly deriving from the burial ground I Tufi at Narce, since these urns can be definitely assigned to the ninth century B.C., and were at least at one time clearly associated with Narce and/or Faliscan territory.

These two figures bring me to the second issue. In spite of T.’s admirable detective work, there remain significant gaps in our documentation, due to archaeological practices around 1900. T. has been able to analyse 136 contexts, most of which he has assigned to one of seven phases within a period of less than 150 years. Each phase (representing one generation) is described extensively, and this constitutes a major accomplishment of his research. Sadly, it also becomes clear how much is missing. For example, when describing the famous decades-long legal battle between the Italian State and the Principe del Drago, T. mentions private excavations around 1897, which according to one source revealed 550 to 600 tombs around Narce (34), while many other tombs were noted but not excavated (356). We have no way of knowing how many of these lost tombs pertained to the period 800–650 B.C.

A final issue concerns the absolute chronology, especially of Phase I at Narce. I have argued elsewhere that Early Iron Age II emerges during the late ninth century instead of around 770/760 B.C., when Euboean shards start to be found at a limited number of sites in Italy amongst countless indigenous ceramic vessels. As noted above, recent research shows a remarkable global alteration in the radiocarbon calibration curve during the ninth century B.C., accompanied in many areas by changing precipitation levels and vegetation patterns. Since we are dealing with agricultural economies, any climate change can have profound effects on regional development. These effects can also be traced in the archaeological record, with many areas of the Mediterranean recording considerable social-economic growth during the eighth century B.C.

Some scholars, however, continue to focus on the arrival of Euboean drinking cups in Italy during the early eighth century B.C. as a trigger for these embedded transformations, looking to exogenous impact as the determining factor. Though T. states that the topic of absolute chronology is risky, he still opts for the conventional one, resulting in a clustering of events in Italy around 770 B.C., placing Narce among the sequences at Osteria dell’Osa, Veii, Pontcagnano and Pithekoussai (351–5). However, the sequence at Osteria dell’Osa can no longer be used as an argument for this clustering around 770 B.C., since the authors, Bietti Sestieri and De Santis, have since altered their position on the absolute chronology of the site. Moreover, T.’s own publication shows that the impact of overseas ceramics at Narce, indirectly implying actual contact, was extremely limited during the period examined. Especially in Phase I (eventually dated to 780–770 B.C.: 355), there is

no detectable relation whatsoever with Euboean ceramics. Without radiocarbon dates as a control mechanism, this phase cannot be dated so precisely. In addition, there are now enough calibrated radiocarbon results around 800 B.C. for central Italy to show that the spectacular developments characterising Early Iron Age II emerged some decades before the arrival of any Euboeans. It is only in Narce Phase 2A (770–750 B.C.) that a single Euboean-cycladic import (and one local imitation in the form of a skyphoid cup) appears among many locally produced ceramics and some *impasto rosso* vessels.

These three issues should be seen as reflections, rather than a critique of T.'s work. Concerning Narce, I fully support his final remarks emphasising the predominantly conservative, local character of its material culture, as well as the variety in funerary customs recorded. This range is the more remarkable when comparing these burial grounds to those of other centres in the vicinity. Each of them seems to select slightly different rituals to entomb the departed. A one-to-one resemblance with sites such as Veii or Crustumerium is not feasible. The search in each settlement for identity markers in the funerary ceremonies, be it as family or clan, is noteworthy, and is probably related to the mixed population groups that made up these thriving communities. Thanks to T.'s detailed publication we can add Narce during the eighth and early seventh century B.C. to the small number of sites in this region that is well published. This is a fine achievement, and it is a pity that Fabrizio Serra have chosen to price the volume (€1,485.00) beyond the capacities even of most research libraries.

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R. OPITZ, M. MOGETTA and N. TERRENATO (EDS), *A MID-REPUBLICAN HOUSE FROM GABII*. University of Michigan, 2016. Online resource. DOI: 10.3998/mpub.9231782. ISBN 9780472999002. US\$150.00.

Someone had to go first. Someone needed the courage to press their hard won intellectual content into service and develop a new apparatus for publication in the twenty-first century. *A Mid-Republican House from Gabii* represents a crucial, if unsteady step into that future. Based on nearly a decade of fieldwork by the University of Michigan's Gabii Project, this resource — as it is clearly neither fully a book nor merely a website — marries a multi-layered history of Building B/Tincu House with an immersive 3D model linked to a research database.

The resource is divided into two main narrative sections: (1) an extended, open-access introduction to the project and (2) a three-level discussion of the history of Building B, including specialists' reports, behind the pay-wall. The introduction, though long, gives a brief account of the site, the Gabii project's history, and the methods employed. Two additional sections, on 'activities' and the theory of 3D models in (at least this) publication, leave the reader intrigued, but insufficiently informed on concepts behind the design of this resource.

Once inside the 'contents' section, the narrative is divided into three overlapping sections intended to offer different levels of engagement with the site's history. The first level, *Story*, is a 1,500-word synopsis written in an accessible style for a non-academic audience that is hyperlinked to the *More* level, where a fuller discussion of the relevant interpretations can be found. Within the *More* level, key sections of text are linked either to activate the related content in the 3D model or to drill down further into the evidence within the third level, *Details*. The *Details* level is organised by phase into a series of stand-alone, data-driven descriptions that can be 'dropped into' from the *More* level. These are followed by the excellent specialists' reports. Almost every stratigraphic unit in the *Details* level is linked to the 3D model, which is out-linked to the project's research database. Unlike the narrative, the database has no 'on-ramp' for the uninitiated, a problem the editors have attempted to tackle with full descriptions of what data each field is supposed to contain.

The centrepiece of this resource is the innovative 3D model that serves as an interactive illustration of the authors' arguments, an interface to the raw research data and a sandbox for the curious, permitting an unstructured perusal of the site and its evidence. The model opens with a