

The San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Glimpses of Humanity

It is not simply the case that San Giuliano is famous for so many rock-cut Etruscan tombs dated to the half-millennium-long heyday of Etruscan civilization that waned by the third century BC. Rather, it is a celebration of the fullness of life, from cradle to grave, that once flourished on that San Giuliano plateau. Centuries ago what is now the very small town of San Giuliano, nestled in the beautiful hills of Lazio, was an important Etruscan *urbs* with its own vast cemetery, that would later provide the foundation for a late medieval *incastellamento* (10-12C AD).

To understand the richness of that culture, one must start with the facts, the gathering of which has been the focus of this interdisciplinary and intercollegiate research project. Over 500 previously unmapped tombs have been documented with GPS, meticulous registration and ample photography. Excavations have been carried out on three looted chamber tombs, producing not only artifacts but human remains. A dataset of bucchero and imported red-figure and black-figure pottery has also been collected, and as the zone also has several undisturbed tombs, there is a fevered pitch of excitement for further excavations.

Details about the tombs' interior décor and exterior structure compare sharply with to the tombs of Cerveteri and Tarquinia. Of great interest in this regard are the possible implications for class and gender distinction. The interpretation of the evidence must be qualified owing to the problems of looting that the majority of the tombs have suffered. Still, careful attention to methodology has allowed one to sift through the tombs' rich archaeological stratigraphy.

The example of Tomb G13-001 offers an interesting example: From the archaeological evidence of this tomb it has been possible to determine the location point of forced entry, and even phases of modern looting, consideration of which may suggest a bit about the tomb's history and even shed light, if only obliquely, on the aforementioned issues of gender and class distinctions.

The culture can also be accessed by considering the San Giuliano Necropolis from the angle of Villanovan *tombe a fossa* (pit graves) considered in comparison to the nearly five hundred Etruscan rock-cut tombs that post-date the Villanovan graves, with close analysis of the San Simone *tomba a fossa*, a pristine pit grave excavated during the SGARP 2018 field season.

A skeleton, even if not entirely preserved, offered the excavation team an opportunity for osteological analysis showing that it had been that of an adult female, a woman of property as the rich assemblage of jewelry and ceramic objects recovered suggest. The ceramic evidence reveals a date of last quarter of the 8th century to the first quarter of the 7th century. That period is precisely during the change from a fossa graves to rock-cut tombs, sc. the movement from Villanovan to Etruscan culture.

One must, of course, also keep in mind the big picture. The point of the project is ultimately twofold. First, it is to gather the data and analyze what is found carefully to add to the body of knowledge about Villanovan, Etruscan, and even late medieval civilization in that part of Etruria. Secondly, but not secondarily, the goal is much more: it is, as we said at the outset of this response to understand human development, as Villanovan bleeds into Etruscan, Etruscan into Roman, and so on, helping us to celebrate the life of a swath of ancient cultures, that we might understand better our own. SGARP represents one a step in that direction: if it is

but a single step, it is nonetheless one that is complex, for it is transdisciplinary, intercollegiate, international, and, most of all, richly human.