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THE PROTOHISTORIC SETTLEMENT OF CHIUSO (LECCO): FIRST RESULTS FROM THE STUDY OF CULTURAL FINDS AND THE REMAINS OF FAUNA

Paolo Boscato & Stefania Casini

Abstract

In 1988, an excavation on the terrace just under the Rocca di Chiuso was conducted. A protohistoric settlement was found that can be ascribed to the Golasecca culture. The earliest chronological term (9th cent. BC) is offered by the lower levels of trench n. 2, while the latest one (5th cent. BC) is fixed by findings from the surface. Both the cultural finds and the remains of fauna from trench n. 2 have been studied at this time, and the results are explained in this paper.

Key words

Lecco, Protohistoric settlement, Golasecca culture, Pottery, Remains of fauna

1. The site

The archaeological site of Chiuso, a few kilometres south of Lecco city, is situated on the northern side of the rocky hill where the military «Rocca» was built in the Middle Ages.

In 1988 the Civic Museum of Lecco, together with the archaeological Soprintendenza of Lombardy, began an excavation on the terrace just under the Rocca – mechanical levelling of the ground, done by the owners, had revealed a line of stones (Casini 1988–89). Two trenches were opened: the first one on the terrace (trench n. 1) would investigate the remains of a wall; the second one (trench n. 2) on the northern slope of the terrace would verify the depth of archaeological deposit.

A protohistoric settlement was found, which can be ascribed to the Golasecca culture (Casini 1994). The earliest chronological term (9th cent. BC) is offered by the lower levels of trench n. 2, while the latest one (5th cent. BC) is fixed by the findings from the surface. The almost complete destruction of the layers of this last horizon is probably due to the building works of the Rocca and by the long occupation of the site during medieval and modern times.

The boundaries of the settlement are still unknown, but stray finds from other places in the area allow us to presume that the plateau which slopes down just in front of the Garlate lake was occupied.

2. The structures and the anthropic levels

In trench n. 1 three dry-stone wall remains of the latest phase of the settlement were discovered. Two of them have North–South orientation (ES 5 and ES 2) but do not share the same axis, which means they probably belong to different

buildings. The third one (ES 27) has an East–West orientation and would have been perpendicular to one of the aforementioned walls. All the walls have only one course of stones.

Numerous plaster fragments should pertain to the covering of the walls' wooden elevation which stood on the stone bases. Thick pieces of burnt clay could be what remains of the floors as are documented in the protohistoric settlement of Como (Frigerio 1986, 51).

Other structures, predating the walls, were found in trench n. 1: a large pit with a fragmented *pithos* inside (ES 7); some small post-holes (ES 21, 22, 23, 24) arranged in a circle; and another round pit (ES 17).

In trench n. 2 another dry-stone wall came to light (ES 15) with East–West orientation and probably belonging to the old terracing. A series of layers were dug to a depth of 2.40 metres (US 14, 16, 20, 25–26, 28) that contained stones of different lithological and dimensional characteristics, a bit of earthy matrix, and a large number of ceramics. The layering was all quite thick, and in particular US 28 which was not entirely removed. In this last layer most of the stones were squared, probably deriving from collapsed structures or from the levelling of the above terrace.

3. Cultural finds and chronology

Only the finds from trench n. 2 have been studied to present. Their positioning appears to be the result of continuous ancient cleanings of the above terrace.

Bronze objects with chronological value are absent from the layers, so dates must be deduced from ceramic evidence. This kind of chronological attribution can be difficult where there is an exclusion of coarse ware in well-dated grave assemblages with high local character. Furthermore, docu-

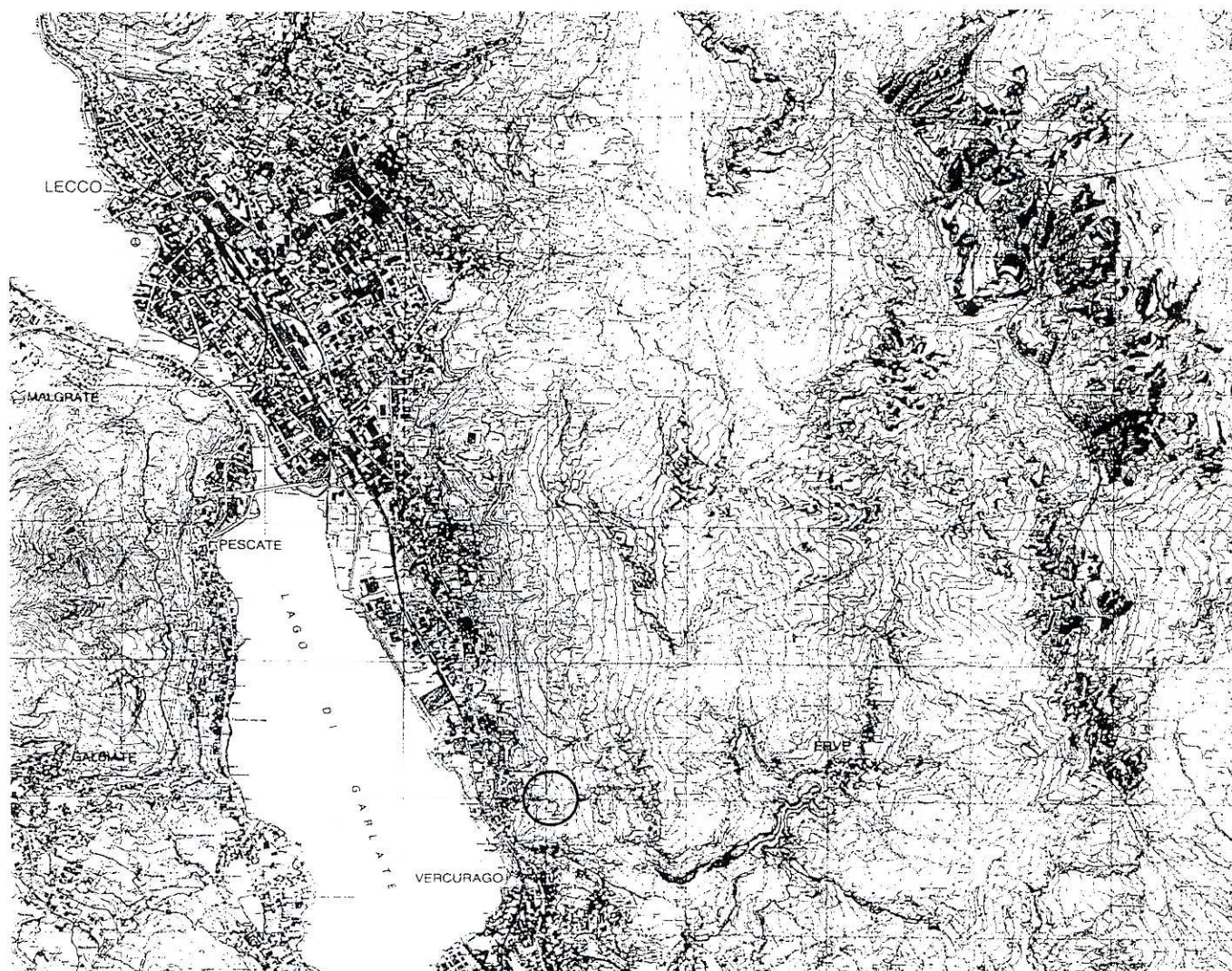


Fig. 1. The site of Chiuso on the Carta Tecnica Regionale BIV4, 1:25.000 (Regione Lombardia) reduced to 1:50.000.

mentation of Iron Age settlements in Northern Italy results more often from surface surveys and chance collections (recoveries) than well excavated sites, that go unpublished (Casini 1994, 128–130). The general situation of the research in this field is, in fact, still unsatisfactory. Fortunately, at Chiuso, a few datable vases do offer chronological indications for the sequence of the layers.

The pottery of Chiuso includes both coarse and fine ware. In the earliest layers, coarse ware is characterised by large handmade vessels of clay rich with inclusions (until 1 cm). US 20 marks the beginning of changes in pottery making, with some of the previous characteristics disappearing completely in the later periods. Here, though the vases are still hand made, they reveal more with accuracy and the inclusions of the clay decrease in quantity and measure. During the 6th cent. BC fine vases were given the finishing touch with a slow wheel. Coarse ware was commonly decorated by finger or with stick impressions on the shoulders or around the rim, until the 7th cent. BC.

Coarse ware cannot be divided into types, owing to the high variability of their shapes. Moreover, their recurrence in most of the soil layers indicates that their method of production remained unchanged for a long time. Only the character of the clay and the higher accuracy of the modelling offer chronological indications.

Among the earliest shaped objects, the ovoid vase must surely be mentioned. It was decorated by a cordon just under the rim, with unchanged formal characters, and was in use during the Late Bronze Age and until the first stages of the Iron Age (9th–8th cent. BC).

3.1. Late Bronze Age

Deeper layers from the Chiuso site were not excavated, so it is impossible to say at this time if it had already been occupied during the Late Bronze Age. Pot sherds from this period, however, have been found in more recent layers: a fragment decorated in «falsa cordicella» technique, proba-

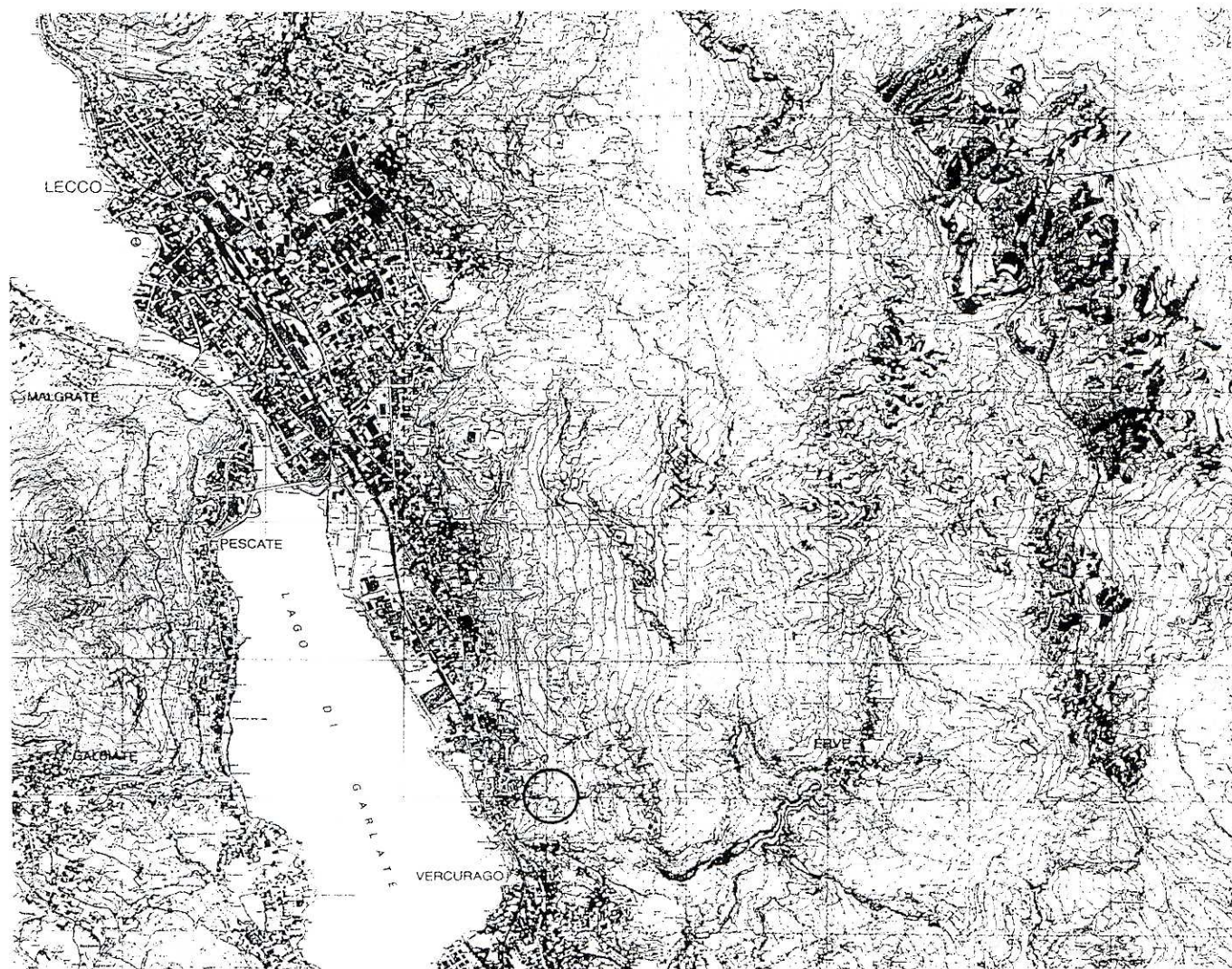


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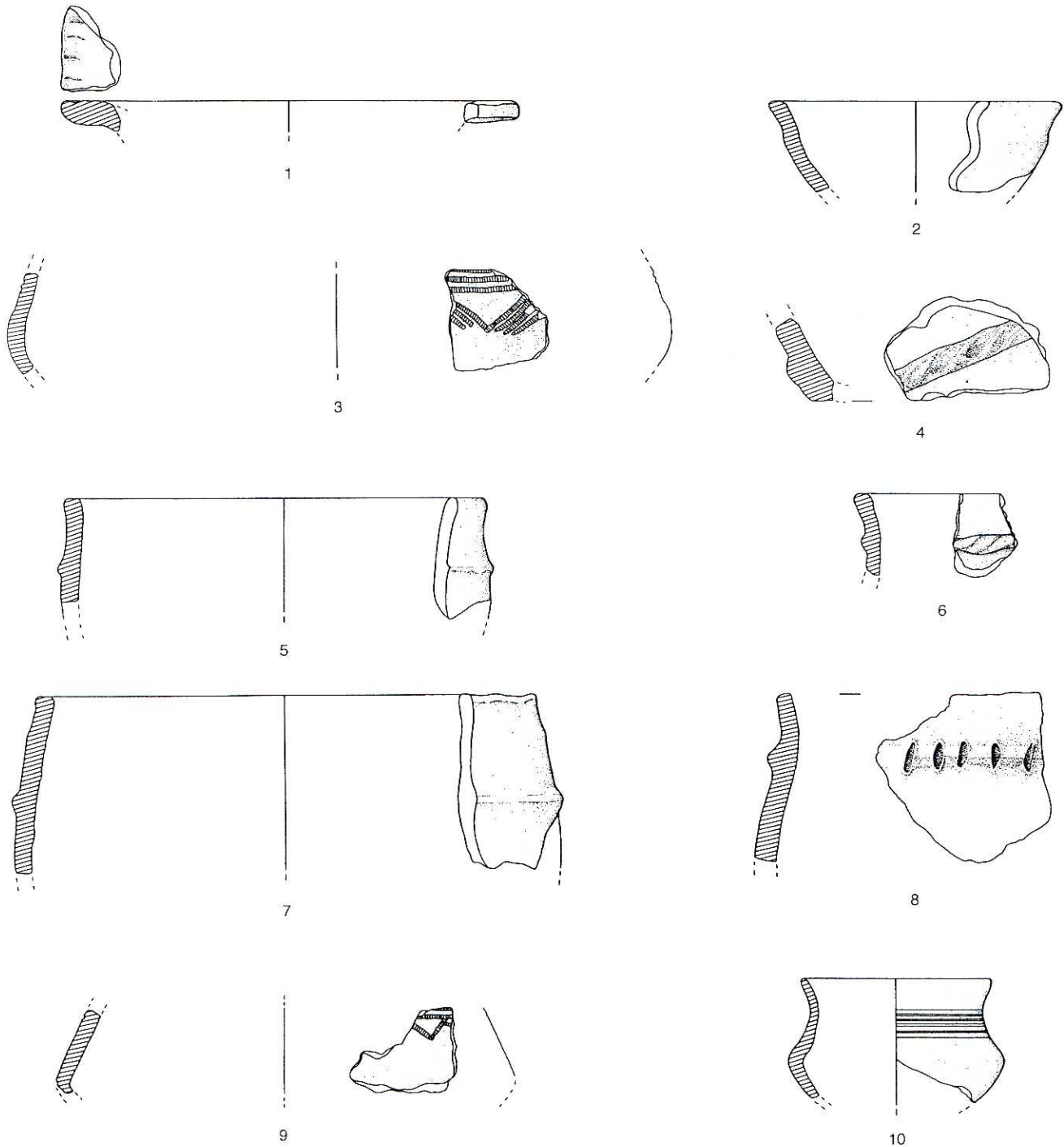


Fig. 2. The earliest pottery from Chiuso: 1-8, Late Bronze Age (1, 8: US 25-26; 2-4, 6: US 16; 5, 7: US 28). 9-10, chronologically detective pottery from US 26-25 (9th-8th cent. BC). Scale 1:3.

bly related to a biconical urn of the Ca' Morta-Malpensa type (10th century BC), as those of the Ca' Morta 292 grave (*Età del Ferro a Como*, tav. 4: 1) and Ascona 10 (Crivelli 1953-54, XXVII: 11); a vase decorated with an oblique twisted cord near the bottom that can be compared with a piece from Badia Pavese-S. Tommaso (Pearce 1991, 108, LXIV: 292); a small carinated cup, which finds parallels in

types of Fossano (Venturino Gambari 1988, 64, XXXII: 6) and Monte Peladolo (Salzani 1973, XVI: 3).

3.2. Golasecca I A/I B (9th-8th cent. BC) - US 28 & 26-25

The pottery that allows us to date US 26-25 includes a fragment of a biconical vase of the Ameno F type (Pauli 1971,

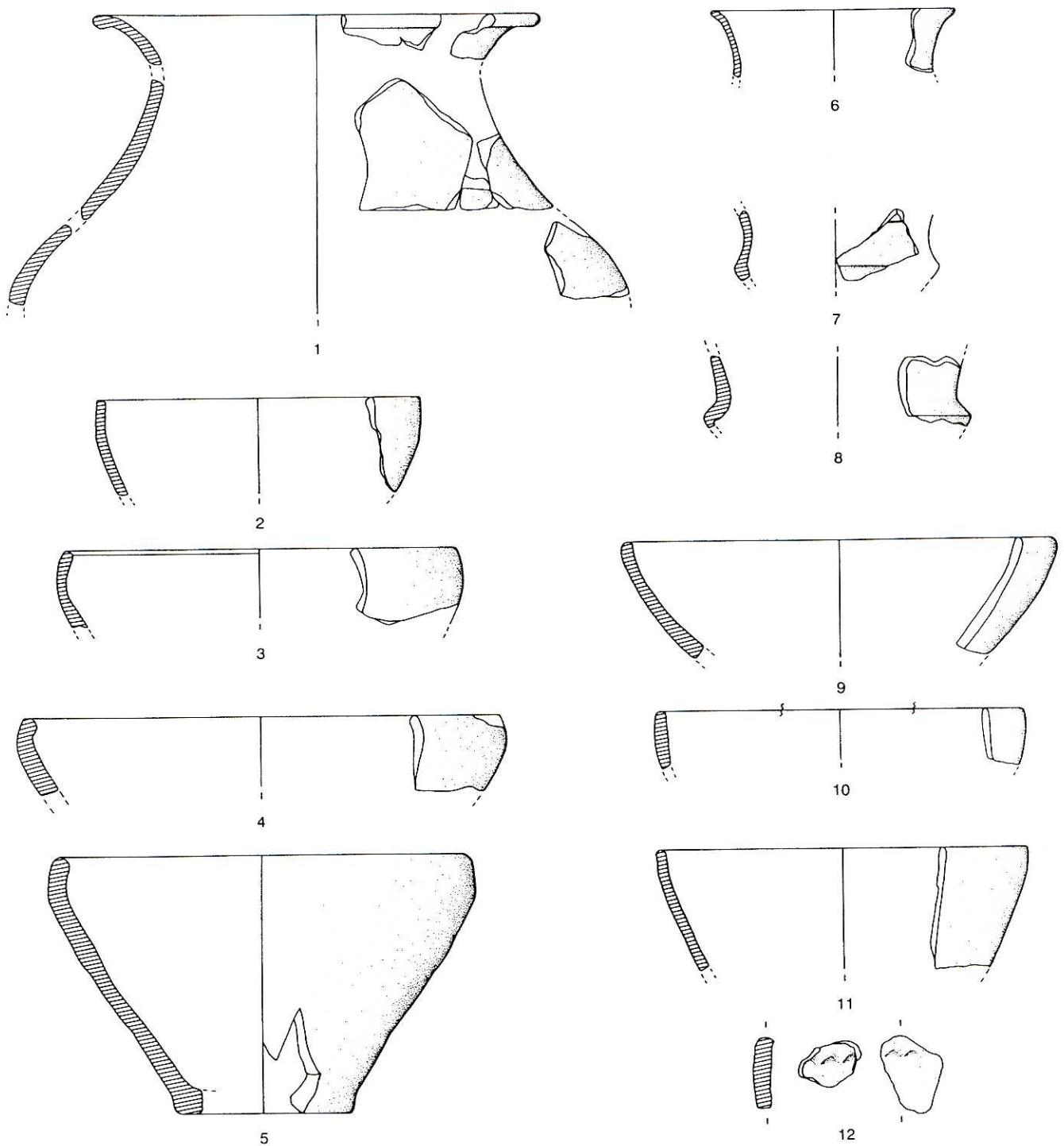


Fig. 3. Chiuso: pottery from US 20 (7th cent. BC). Scale 1:3.

10: 19; Primas 1970, 1: E and H) and a carinated beaker that can be ascribed to G. I A (9th–8th cent. BC), it being more wide than high. The beaker finds strong parallels to those of the tombs at Sesto Calende-Cascina Gaiaccio (9th cent. BC) and Sesto Calende-Mulini di Mezzo (8th cent. BC) (De Marinis 1970, 1: 2 and 3: 3).

3.3. Golasecca I C (7th cent. BC) – US 20

In this layer are present some handmade bowls of fine clay and a sleeked surface are usually associated with grave assemblages of the final 8th cent. and of the 7th cent. BC. To this phase can also be ascribed some sherds of carinated

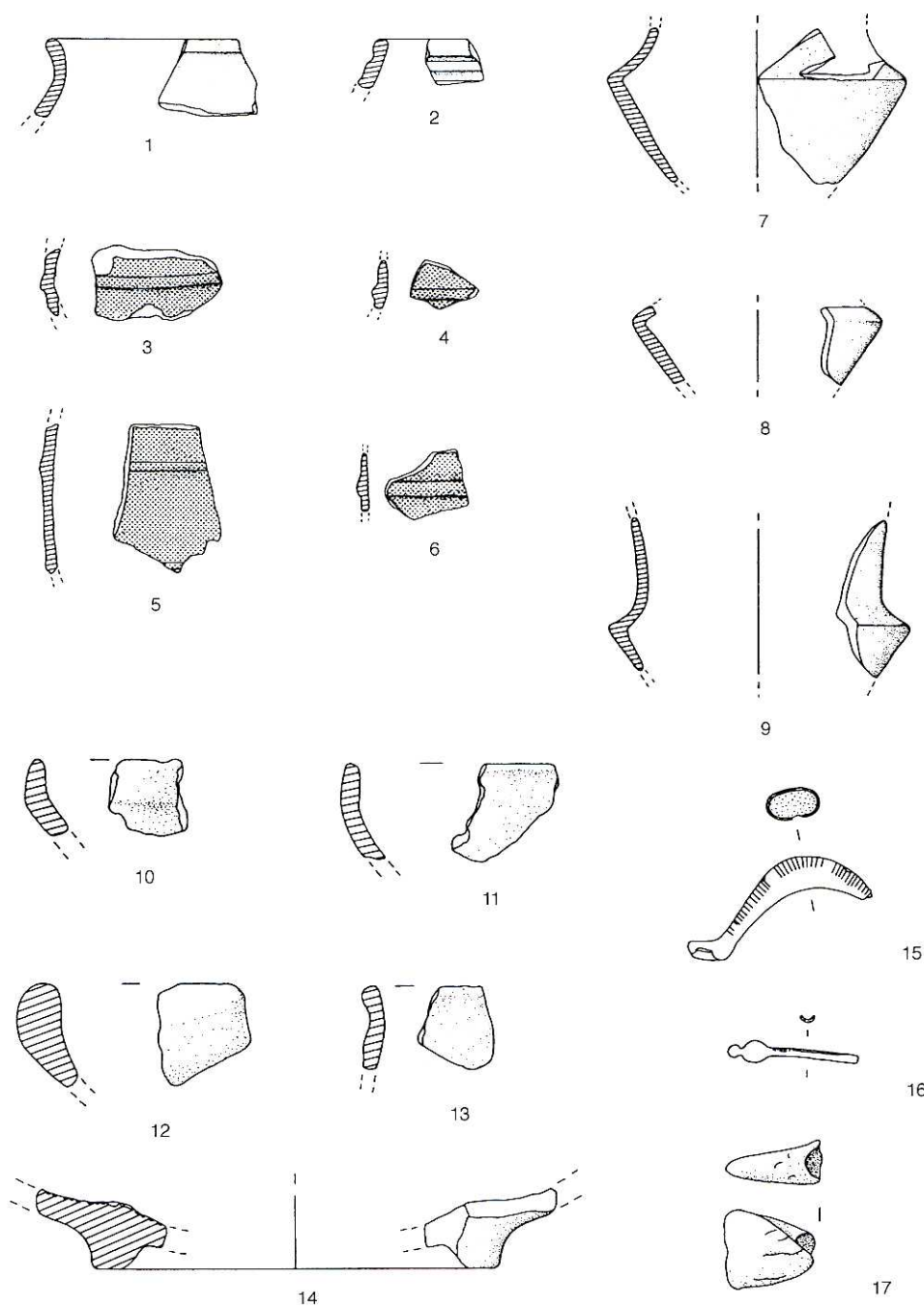


Fig. 4. Chiuso: 1-9, pottery from US 16-14 (6th cent. BC); 10-14, pottery from the surface (5th cent. BC); 15-17, bronze objects from the surface. Pottery scale 1:3; bronzes 1:2.

beakers. Some fragments, partially reassembled, seem to belong to a biconical urn of the middle and late Atestino II period, as the one found in the grave Este-Casa di Ricovero 235 (Frey 1969, 5: 11). This vase, probably coming from abroad, witnesses the relations between Golasecca people and Paleoveneti.

3.4. Golasecca II (6th cent. BC) – US 16 & 14

Chronological indicators are: a fragment of a ribbed lip cup of G. II A and II A/B (first half of 6th cent. BC); carinated beakers and fragments of red painted ribbed vases (De Ma-

rinis 1981, 193), both very common during G. II B (second half of 6th cent.).

3.5. Golasecca III A (5th cent. BC) – Surface

Materials found on the surface of the terrace include coarse ware made on the potter's wheel (a technique which comes into use during the Golasecca culture at the beginning of the 5th cent. BC (De Marinis 1988, 216-217)) and fragments of red cups which imitate the Po valley etruscan types (De Marinis 1981, 200-202; Casini 1986, 132-134; Casini, Frontini & Gatti 1986, 246-265).

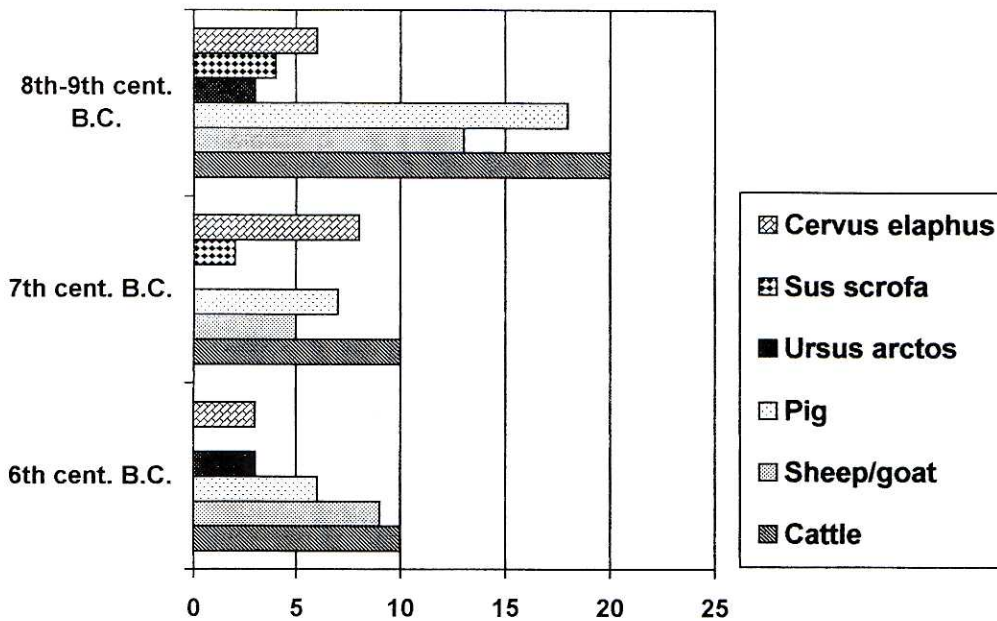


Fig. 5. Chiuso: ratio of identified bones of domestic and main wild mammals subdivided in three chronological horizons.

A small piece of black glazed pottery of attic provenience must be dated to this phase as well; it is interesting to note that during the 5th cent. BC, Attic pottery is documented in all the settlements of Golasecca culture, such as Como and Bergamo (De Marinis 1986, 45–46; Fortunati, Zuccala & Vitali 1990, 148–150).

All the bronze objects come from the surface, such as a foot of a fibula belonging to a type of the 6th cent. BC and a Mazzucca di Montanaso type bronze fibula of small dimensions, which can be dated to the latest 6th and early 5th cent. BC, if compared to those of Pazzallo (Primas 1970, 46: B5) and Cuggiono (De Marinis 1981, 7: 6–7). Some pieces of *aes rude* were also stray finds. The use of *aes rude* as a monetary mean dates back to 8th cent. BC, but in the Golasecca culture is documented only during the 5th cent. BC.

(S.C.)

4. The faunal remains: husbandry and hunting

Golasecca settlements never gave the remains of fauna until now, probably because the chemical characters of the soil prevented bone preservation.

The small osteological sample from Chiuso is therefore important because it gives us completely heretofore unknown information about the management of fauna during this cultural stage. The small number of remains in each stage do not allow statistical analyses. Some of the bones, generally well preserved, are partially burned and portions with cut marks.

Fauna from this settlement was based both on husbandry and hunting. It is striking to note the relative abundance of wild animals' remains (24% of the identified bones) (Tab. 1, Fig. 5). The forestal environment around the settlement probably afforded an easy supply of Red Deer (the most frequently hunted species and economically important after the domestic ungulates), Wild Boar and Brown Bear. The Wild

Boar and Red Deer were of larger size than the present ones in Northern Italy. (Measurements have been taken following Driesch's guide of 1976).

Red Deer measurements

Phalanx 1	GLP	BP	BD	Calcaneus	GL	GB
	59.0	23.0	20.7		113.8	35.0
Phalanx 2	GL	SD	BD	Tibia	DD	BD
	38.7	15.1	16.3		41.9	52.3
Phalanx 3	DLS	MBS	LD			
	53.3	16.5	52.1			

Among domestic animals, the most important were cattle, which were of small size, with a prevalence of remains in the three different chronological stages considered. Calves' remains are very rare and probably cattle husbandry consisted mostly of milk production.

Cattle measurements

Scapula	GLP	LG	BG	Metatarsus	BP	DP	
	53.3	46.0	37.0		45.8	41.9	
Scapula	GLP	LG	BG	Astragalus	GLL	GLM	DM
	62.8	54.1	47.3		61.3	56.0	316
Calcaneus	GL	GB		Phalanx 3	DLS	MBS	LD
	107.4	38.7			54.0	17.5	43.0

Pig measurements

M/3	L	B	M/2	L	B
	30.0	15.0		19.3	13.4
M/3	L	B	Ulna	BPC	DPA
	32.3	15.6		18.0	29.2

Tab. 1. Numbers of identified bones (NISP) of domestic and wild mammals.

	6th cent. BC		7th cent. BC	8th–9th cent. BC			Tot. NISP
	US 14	US 16	US 20	US 25	US 26	US 28	
Cattle	2	8	10	9	3	8	40
Goat		1			1		2
Sheep				1			1
Sheep/Goat	1	7	5	4	1	6	24
Pig	1	5	7	11	4	3	31
Dog				2	1		3
<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		1					1
<i>Ursus arctos</i>		3		1	2		6
<i>Mustela putorius</i>			2				2
<i>Sus scrofa</i>			2	2	2		6
<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		3	8	2	3	1	17
Tot. NISP	4	28	34	32	17	18	133

Tab. 2. The domestic ungulates: skeletal parts and numbers of identified bones.

	6th cent. BC			7th cent. BC			8th–9th cent. BC		
	US 14–16			US 20			US 25–26–28		
	Cattle	Sheep-Goat	Pig	Cattle	Sheep-Goat	Pig	Cattle	Sheep-Goat	Pig
Horncore		1		1			3		
Max-mandible			2	1	1	1	1	3	4
Cranium	1								
Teeth	4	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	7
Vertebrae							1	1	
Scapula	2					1	2		
Humerus		2			1		1		1
Radius-ulna				1			1		
Ulna								1	1
Carpals	1			1			1		
Metacarpals	1			2			1	2	
Pelvis		1		1					
Tarsals							3		1
Metatarsals		1	1		1		1		
Metapodials								2	
Phalanx 1	1				1		1		3
Phalanx 2								1	1
Phalanx 3				1					
Tot. NISP	10	9	6	10	5	7	20	13	18

Among 31 pig remains, 4 belong to young animals and out of 27 sheep/goat remains, 5 are related to individuals younger than 2 years old (Amorosi 1989): this suggests a diversified exploitation of these domestic ungulates to obtain meat, wool and milk.

During the excavation, bones were recovered without sieving and sheep/goats and pigs were partially underestimated in relation to the cattle.

Skeletal parts of domestic ungulates (Tab. 2) are especially represented by cranial and limb parts, while fragments of vertebrae are very rare: it seems an assemblage of meal remains. These animals were probably slaughtered in a different site of the settlement.

In the 9th–8th century BC levels there are three remains of a small-sized dog; gnawing marks of carnivores (perhaps dogs) are present on some fragments of bones in the two upper levels as well.

(P.B.)

5. Summary

In 1988 an excavation at Chiuso on the terrace just under the Rocca was carried out, finding a protohistoric settlement which can be ascribed to the Golasecca culture. The earliest

chronological term (9th cent. BC) is offered by the lower levels of trench n. 2, while the latest one (5th cent. BC) is fixed by the findings from the surface. On the terrace, four dry-stone wall remains of the latest phase of the settlement were found. Only the finds from trench n. 2 have been studied thus far. Bronze objects with chronological value are absent from the layers, and dates have been deduced from the pottery, which includes both coarse and fine ware. Fortunately, some datable vases offer chronological indications for the sequence of the layers.

Golasecca settlements have never given faunal remains until now, due to the chemical characteristic of the soil. The small osteological sample from Chiuso is therefore important because it gives us completely unknown information about the management of fauna during Golasecca culture.

The resources of fauna were based both on husbandry and hunting. There is a relative abundance of wild animal remains: Red Deer, Wild Boar and Brown Bear. Among domestic animals, the most important are cattle; pigs, sheep/goats and a dogs are also present.

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