



# Situla Art: An Iron Age Artisanal Tradition Found Between the Apennines and the Eastern Alps and Its Identity Valencies

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## Abstract

Situla Art is an Iron Age artisanal tradition dated to c. 660/650–275 BC, corresponding to the Hallstatt C2 to the La Tène B2 phases. It is characterised by striking sheet-bronze objects with embossed and/or incised decoration in Orientalising taste with animals, plants and/or human figures generally distributed in friezes. Situla Art is documented between the Apennines and the eastern Alps, and Este is suggested as its key centre. This paper provides a long overdue literature review, a working definition for Situla Art and an updated catalogue with 306 objects. It also (re-) investigates the influences which may have led to the emergence of Situla Art, its development and decline. Hats and earrings depicted in Situla Art are investigated to highlight their identity valencies, and to provide socio-political insights on the Iron Age elite who used Situla Art as a non-linguistic symbol-based system to acquire, exhibit and legitimate power over time in the area of its distribution.

**Keywords** Situla Art · Iron Age · Decorated sheet-bronzes · Apennines · Eastern Alps · Identity valencies

## Introduction

For about four centuries, c. 660/650–275 BC—Hallstatt C2—La Tène B2 (hereafter: Ha and LT)—i.e., 15–20 generations (Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 59–62), communities between the Apennines and the eastern Alps shared a particular artisanal tradition characterised by striking sheet-bronze decorated objects labelled in the literature as ‘Situla Art’ (Müller-Karpe, 1968, pp. 153–154; Fogolari, 1975, pp. 124–132; 1988, pp. 83–99; Capuis, 1993, pp. 152–159; Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99; Teržan, 2020, pp. 198–199; Voltolini, 2020, pp. 29–32). This particular artisanal tradition takes

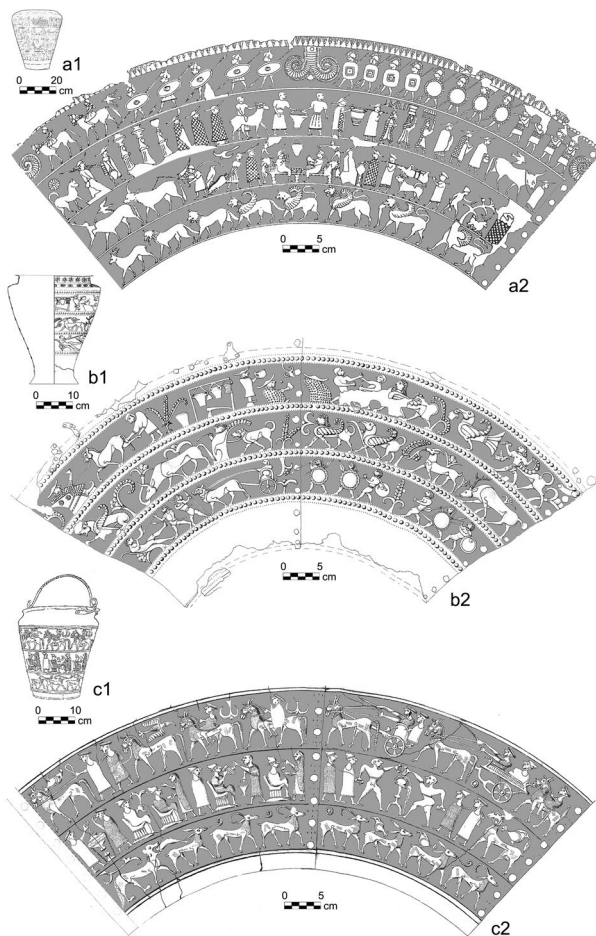
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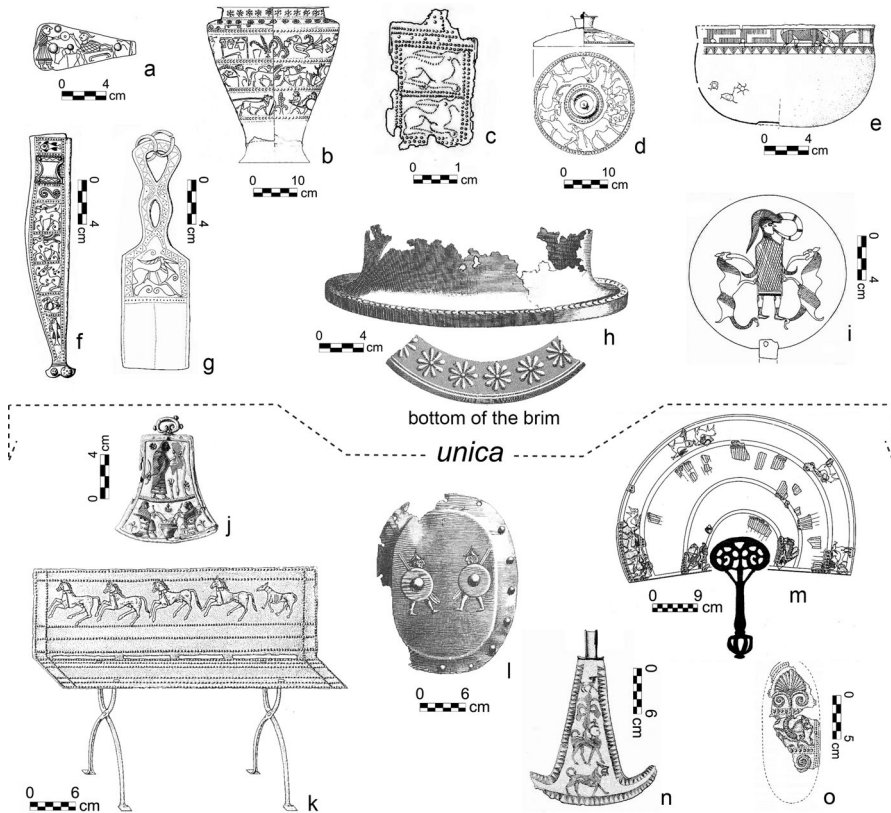
its name from the *situla*, i.e., a bronze bucket, which, thanks to its intrinsic aesthetic value and its possible linkage with eastern Mediterranean artistic traditions, acquired importance in the late nineteenth century after the discoveries of decorated *situlas* at Bologna (the Certosa *situla*; Zannoni, 1876), Este (the Benvenuti *situla*; Prosdocimi, 1880), and Vače (the Vače *situla*; von Hochstetter, 1883). These three *situlas* are shown in Fig. 1 a–c in which, reversing Eibner’s (1993, p. 103, fig. 1) and Nebelsick’s (2019, p. 413, fig. 2) method for highlighting ancient decoration, they have been shaded with a grey background to emphasise the depictions displayed.

A century later, between the 1980s and 1990s, *Situla Art* was characterised as ‘*situlas* but also their lids, belt plates, knife and sword scabbards; bronze sheets in general decorated with geometric motifs, animals, plants, and figurative scenes



**Fig. 1** The **a** Certosa (after Càssola Guida, 2022, p. 199, fig. 1), **b** Benvenuti (after Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, fig. 8 [between pp. 320–321] and pl. 176, no. 1), and **c** Vače (after Starè, 1955, appendix; Dular, 2016, p. 99, pl. 1, no. 7) *situlas*

depicted by embossing, engraving and stamping’ (Fogolari, 1975, p. 125; see also Fogolari, 1988, p. 83). Nowadays, new discoveries and the re-evaluation of past evidence have led to better insights on Situla Art. Online Resource 1 lists 306 Situla Art objects organised into ten different classes: 110 belt plates, 69 situlas, 33 earrings, 25 lids, 17 vessels other than situlas, 11 scabbards, nine palettes, seven helmets, two mirrors, and six unica (one *tintinnabulum* [i.e., a bronze bell], one miniature couch, one breastplate, one *flabellum* [i.e., a fan], one axe, and one wall plaque) (Fig. 2a–o).



**Fig. 2** The Situla Art corpus: an example is displayed for each suggested class while the *unica* are all displayed (below the dotted line). **a** belt plate from Carceri (Frey, 1969, pl. 67, no. 18); **b** the Benvenuti situla (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pl. 176, no. 1); **c** earring from Stična (Frey, 1969, pl. 81, no. 43); **d** lid from Este-Rebato grave 187 (Frey, 1969, pl. 40, no. 1); **e** vessels other than situlas, bowl from Este-Benvenuti grave 122 (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pl. 141, no. 2); **f** scabbard from Caverzano-Colle Castellir (Frey, 1969, pl. 81, no. 42); **g** palette from Gazzo Veronese-Turbine Chievo grave 1 (Salzani, 1997, p. 69, fig. 1, no. 5); **h** helmet from Forlì-Rio Carpena (Santarelli, 1887, pl. I, no. 1); **i** mirror from Bologna-Certosa grave 104 (Macellari, 2002, p. 29, pl. 19, no. 11); *unica*: **j** bell (*tintinnabulum*) from Bologna-Arsenale (Morigi Govi, 1971, pl. LII); **k** miniature couch from Este-Ricovero grave 23 (Chieco Bianchi, 1987, p. 210, fig. 29, no. 84); **l** breastplate from Forlì-Rio Carpena (Santarelli, 1887, pl. I, no. 7); **m** fan (*flabellum*) from Waisenberg-mound 1 (Gleirscher, 2011, p. 333, fig. 3); **n** axe from Bologna-Arnoaldi grave 264 (Carancini, 1984, pl. 101, no. 3443); and **o** wall plaque from Este-Meggiaro (Salerno, 2002, p. 154, fig. 58, no. 17)

Unfortunately, 17 of the 306 listed objects are very poorly preserved and it is not possible or very difficult to identify their original form (see Online Resource 1).

It is worth noting that our knowledge of Situla Art depictions is still limited by reliance on very old drawings (which are interpretations), or poor quality photographs, which only in a few cases have been re-assessed recently (e.g., Capuis et al., 2016, p. 24; Murgelj, 2020). Moreover, even recent drawings made after modern restorations sometimes show errors (e.g., the number of men depicted in the middle of the top frieze of the Dolenjske Toplice situla was reduced from three to two in recent publications; cf. Lucke & Frey, 1962, pl. 72, no. 2 and Eibner, 2018, p. 79, fig. 1, no. 3, top and bottom).

Voltoni (2020, p. 29; see also Knez, 1983, p. 86; Capuis, 1993, p. 156) suggests that the situla was the main container used during elite banquets for alcoholic beverages (e.g., wine or beer) whereas lids were possibly used in elite gift-exchange; belt plates were used as ornaments and weapons were displayed during parades. Although some scholars consider Veneto votive plaques as an aspect of Situla Art (Fogolari, 1975, p. 125; 1988, p. 83), I prefer to consider them as a derivation of Situla Art (*sensu* Kriss, 1961, p. 65). The two productions show similarities in the way figures were depicted and the use of bronze sheets as a support, but they likely belong to two different, separate, spheres: Situla Art relates to the temporal sphere while votive plaques refer to the cultic sphere. Hence, Iron Age metal votive offerings such as, for example, the votive discs from Montebelluna, interpreted as depicting goddesses (Gambacurta & Capuis, 1998), the votive plaques showing foot and mounted soldiers, worshippers and goddesses found at Este sanctuaries such as the one dedicated to Reitia (Ruta Serafini, 2002; Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2010, 2020), or the votive plaques from Gurina (Meyer, 1885), are here not considered to be Situla Art and therefore they are not listed in Online Resource 1. Exceptions are only made for Situla Art objects which were subsequently recycled as votive plaques. Moreover, stamping becomes the predominant way of producing sheet-bronze votive offerings from the fourth century BC onwards (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2020, p. 15 and references therein) and seems not to characterise Situla Art. This pattern confirms that votive plaques and Situla Art do not share the same audience. Stamping, in fact, is a production technique which is affordable by the many and not only by the elite, as is the case for Situla Art.

Mainly on the basis of decorated situlas, Situla Art objects are described as artefacts ‘made of sheet bronze riveted together’ (Knez, 1983, p. 85), embossed from the reverse using a puncheon/s and finished by incision with a chisel/s on the obverse to depict animals, plants and/or human figures in Orientalising taste, with the decoration generally distributed in friezes (Kastelic, 1956, p. 5; Buson, 2002, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99). Situla Art was demanding to produce (it took 113 h to reproduce the Benvenuti situla: Buson, 2017, p. 286; and 206 h to reproduce the Certosa situla: Buson, 2022, p. 496) and was most probably the work of specialised artisans. However, in at least one case, the Arnoaldi situla, Zaghetto and Buson (2022, pp. 215–217) claim that the inexperience of the artisan led to damage during its production both at its shoulder and at the bottom.

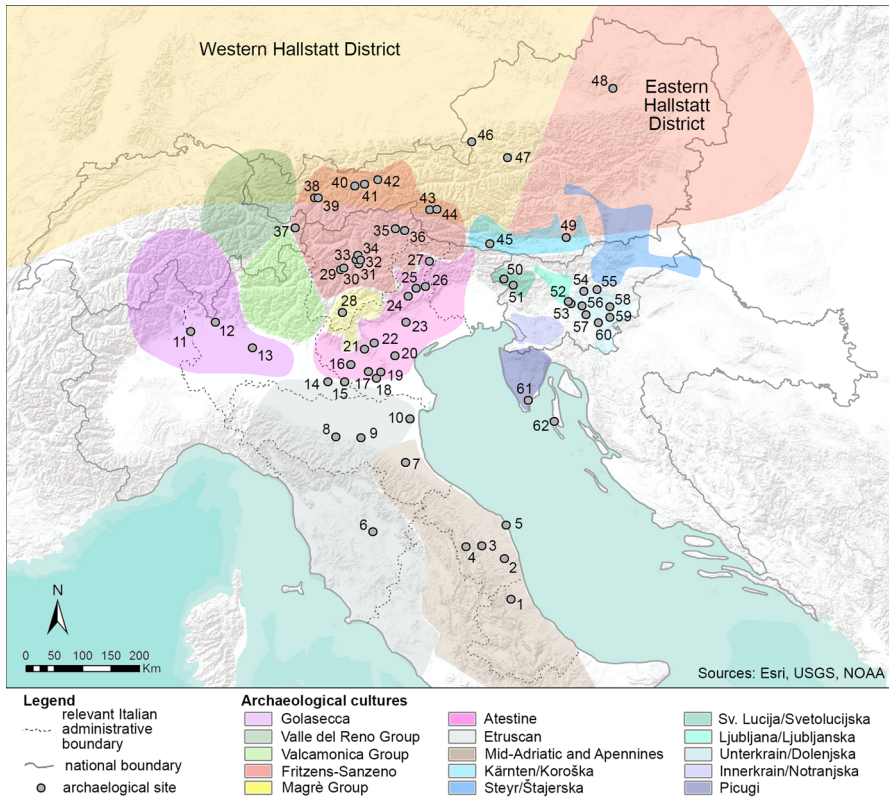
Decoration on Situla Art objects tends to symmetry, to *horror vacui* (the fear/dislike of empty spaces), to isoccephaly and to displaying figures in profile (Kastelic,

1956, p. 6; Stipčević, 1963, p. xvii; Teržan, 2020, p. 198). Situla Art is also ‘anachronistic’ as, over time, it continues to display a specific Orientalising taste even when it goes out of fashion in the rest of the Mediterranean basin (Mansuelli, 1962, p. 116; 1969, p. 112; see also Chieco Bianchi, 1987, p. 235).

Following Colonna (1980), recent literature (see Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99; Paltineri, 2016, p. 123; Gambari, 2020, p. 49) agrees on the idea that the toreutic know-how and narrative style at the basis of Situla Art most probably developed in northern Italy. Colonna suggests that the oldest Situla Art object was found at the Etruscan site of *Felsina*/Bologna. There, skilled north-Etrurian artisans influenced by Orientalising taste mediated through Tyrrhenian Etruria were active in the mid/late seventh century BC (Colonna, 1980, p. 186). From Bologna these artisans possibly moved to Este where a major Situla Art production centre emerged, merging Urnfield, Orientalising and Etruscan artistic influences. Bondini (2012; see also Perego, 2013) suggests that the emergence of Situla Art in the Iron Age Veneto should be seen as closely related to the rise of elites. According to the literature (Kromer, 1980; Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99; Eibner, 2018), the themes and figures depicted on Situla Art are indeed elite-related (i.e., war scenes, military, ceremonial and triumphal parades, feasting scenes with alcohol consumption, music, boxing matches, sex, hunting and ploughing scenes, and real and fantastic animals). The emergence of elites and the concentration of wealth explain how centres such as Bologna or Este could attract the north-Etrurian artisans to whom Colonna (1980, pp. 180–181) attributes the production of the first Situla Art objects. Pliny (*Natural History* 3, 15, 115) describes *Felsina*/Bologna as ‘the chief place in Etruria’ (Rackham, 1942, pp. 84–85) while Fogolari (1975, p. 64) describes Este ‘as the most ancient, most important and richest centre of the ancient Veneti’.

Nevertheless, the relative importance of each influence—i.e., Urnfield, Orientalising and Etruscan—on Situla Art has yet to be fully understood. Perego (2013, p. 256), for example, has recently drawn attention to similarities between the decoration recorded on the late/end eighth-century BC wooden throne found at Verucchio in Lippi grave 89/1972 (von Eles, 2002a, p. 275; 2002b, pls. XXV–XXVI), which shows Orientalising influence, and Situla Art. These similarities consist in the presence of figures arranged in friezes, profile pictures, parades of animals, feasting, warriors, and weaving scenes. In the literature, Verucchio is considered the heir of Frattesina (Bentini et al., 2020, p. 391), which was a key Final Bronze—Early Iron Age manufacturing and trading site in the Italian Adriatic, which was at the centre of a trading network that stretched from the Levant to the Baltic (Pearce, 2020, p. 167 and references therein). Through the movement of artisans from Verucchio, this artistic know-how could have been passed on first to Bologna and then to Este. On the other hand, it is possible that Orientalising influences mediated both from the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian districts converged at Bologna.

From Este, Situla Art seems to have spread, at a variable pace, over a vast area encompassing several Iron Age cultural districts where interaction was possible through Alpine passes (Mansuelli, 1969, pp. 113–114; Zaghetto, 2017, p. 57, fig. 15; Voltolini, 2020, p. 29, fig. 1). This area nowadays corresponds to central and northern Italy, eastern Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia and northern Croatia (Fig. 3). Zaghetto (2006, p. 44; 2007, p. 173; see also Gabrovec, 1961,



**Fig. 3** Distribution of Situla Art finds according to Online Resource 1 superimposed upon the main Iron Age archaeological cultures recognised by the literature in the area considered (archaeological cultures after Gabrovec, 1999, p. 150, fig. 1; Grömer, 2018, p. 214; Marzatico, 2019, p. 76, fig. 4; Saccoccio, 2020, p. 142, fig. 52). List of sites shown: 1. Campli-Campovalano, 2. Grottazzolina, 3. Pitino di San Severino Marche, 4. Matelica, 5. Numana, 6. Castelnuovo Berardenga-Poggione, 7. Forlì, 8. Castelvetro, 9. Bologna, 10. Spina, 11. Sesto Calende, 12. Grandate, 13. Caravaggio, 14. Bagnolo San Vito-Forcello, 15. Gazzo Veronese, 16. Oppeano, 17. Montagnana, 18. Carceri, 19. Este, 20. Padua, 21. Montebello Vicentino, 22. Vicenza, 23. Montebelluna, 24. Mel, 25. Caverzano, 26. Pieve d'Alpago, 27. Calalzo di Cadore-Lagole, 28. Rovereto, 29. Mechel, 30. Sanzeno, 31. Vadena, 32. Laives/Leifers, 33. Eppan, 34. Moritzing, 35. Lothen/Campolino, 36. Vintl, 37. Scuol, 38. Fließ, 39. Pillerhöhe, 40. Oberperfluss, 41. Aldrans, 42. Volders-Himmelreich Wattens, 43. Welzelach, 44. Matri, 45. Möderndorf, 46. Dürrenberg, 47. Hallstatt, 48. Kuffarn, 49. Waisenberg, 50. Kobarid/Caporetto, 51. Most na Soči/Santa Lucia di Tolmino, 52. Molnik, 53. Magdalenska gora, 54. Vače, 55. Zagorje, 56. Stična, 57. Valična vas, 58. Brezje, 59. Novo Mesto, 60. Dolenjske Toplice, 61. Nesactium, 62. Osor (colour version available online)

p. 3; Fogolari, 1988, p. 83; Voltolini, 2020, p. 30) argues that the shared artistic language of Situla Art was able to link communities differing in terms of spoken language, displayed material culture, and most probably also identity. It is very interesting that the elites located in this particular geographical area adopted a similar way to acquire, exhibit and legitimate power through Situla Art for many centuries (Torbrügge, 1992, p. 582; Zaghetto, 2007, p. 173; Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99).

Figure 3 plots the most important Iron Age archaeological cultures identified by scholarship in the area considered. Some of them have been equated in the literature with ethnic groups mentioned in the ancient written sources, such as the Etruscans located between the Lazio and Emilia-Romagna regions, but also present in Campania (MacIntosh Turfa, 2018 and references therein). The Atestine, or Este, culture, recorded in the Veneto and part of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia regions, is equated with the ancient Veneti (Helbig, 1882), the Fritzens-Sanzano culture, recorded in Südtirol and Tyrol, is equated with the Rhaeti (Marzatico, 2019 and references therein), and the Golasecca culture, located in Lombardy, Piedmont and Ticino, is equated with the Insubres (Gambari, 2017, p. 46). Assigning ethnic names to the Iron Age Italic communities located in the mid-Adriatic and Apennine districts is more complex, although ancient written sources recall, among the others, the names of the Picentes, Umbrians, Sabines and Samnites (Benelli, 2018). According to Kastelic (1961, p. 32), the area between Hallstatt, Austria, and Trebenište, Macedonia, was inhabited by the Illyrians, but attempts at identifying the archaeological footprint of this people have been complicated by nationalist agendas (e.g., Bowden, 2003). I have plotted the Iron Age archaeological cultures in the Balkans and Pannonia following Gabrovec (1999, p. 150, fig. 1), whose paper is widely cited in recent literature (see Turk, 2005, p. 12, fig. 6; Tecco Hvala, 2012, p. 42, fig. 9; Črešnar, 2017, p. 257, fig. 1). Although I am aware of the drawbacks of the model, the Western (*Westhallstattkreis*) and Eastern (*Osthallstattkreis*) Hallstatt Cultural Districts are drawn following Grömer (2018, p. 214; see also Müller-Scheessel, 2000, p. 52, map 1, and pp. 54–56, maps 2–4). From about 450 BC until the Roman conquest in the first century BC, more or less the same area is subsequently characterised by the so-called La Tène culture (Holzer, 2018, p. 245).

Despite the proliferation of studies on Situla Art, especially from the 1960s (see discussion below), recent scholarship has estimated quite different total numbers of Situla Art objects: they are ‘more than 150’ for Sassatelli (2013, p. 100; see also Capuis et al., 2016, p. 21), ‘more than 200’ for Voltolini (2020, p. 32), and 146 for Zaghetto (2022, pp. 466–472). Only Zaghetto (2022, pp. 466–472; see also Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 52–59) provides a list of Situla Art objects. I was able to list 264 Situla Art objects in my PhD thesis (Saccoccio, 2020, pp. 191–204, tab. 14). As noted above, Online Resource 1 lists 306 Situla Art objects. This variation between the between different scholars’ estimates is not the result of the impact of new discoveries, but rather suggests that different scholars have a varying definition of Situla Art and that a revision of past literature is therefore needed. Hence, the main aim of this paper is to produce a sound literature review of Situla Art which will allow us to: (a) understand the pattern/s which led to the present, albeit still limited, understanding of the Situla Art phenomenon; (b) provide a working definition for Situla Art which is inclusive of all the peculiarities this phenomenon involves (i.e., decorative patterns shown, object forms and classes, geographical distribution and date); (c) investigate some Situla Art identity valencies; and thereby (d) gain insights concerning the prehistoric people who decided to adopt Situla Art as an artisanal and artistic tradition.

## Situla Art Through the History of Study

A comprehensive literature review on Situla Art is still lacking and this limits our understanding of the phenomenon and the way we approach, investigate and interpret it. In this section I address the most influential works published on this topic to dissect the development of this particular field of study from its emergence to present times.

### The Origins of the Debate

Since the first discoveries made in the mid/late nineteenth century, decorated situlas have been considered to be an artistic production of particular local cultures. This was the case of the Certosa situla (see Fig. 1a), found in grave 68 at Bologna-Certosa in 1869, which Zannoni (1876, pp. 121–132) suggested was Umbrian; of the Vače situla (see Fig. 1c), found in 1882 at Vače, which von Hochstetter (1883, p. 175) suggested was Alpine or peri-Alpine; and of the Benvenuti situla (see Fig. 1b), found in grave 126 (according to the new numeration published by Capuis & Chicco Bianchi, 2006, pp. 320–331) at Este-Villa Benvenuti (hereafter: Benvenuti) in 1880, which Prosdocimi (1880, 1882) suggested was ‘Euganean’. Prosdocimi mostly relied on the ancient written sources and the close link between the situla and similar pottery vessels found in Este, the so-called *situliformi*, to support his claim. It was quickly dismissed, on linguistic, archaeological and ancient written sources grounds by Helbig (1882) in favour of the ethnic label Veneti. Likewise, Zannoni (1876, pp. 121–143) employed ancient written sources, material culture and a funerary ritual analysis to discard the hypothesis of an Etruscan origin of the Certosa situla in favour of an Umbrian one. Later on, using comparisons from Etruscan art, Ducati (1923, p. 67) claimed that the Certosa situla was in fact Etruscan and to be dated to around 500 BC. Lacking ancient written sources, von Hochstetter (1883, pp. 170–191) employed a completely archaeological approach. He relied on the fact that objects decorated in a similar way were to be found mostly in the Alpine and peri-Alpine area, and that the situla as a form was of Alpine tradition although also found in the eastern Mediterranean. He also argued that goods depicted on the Vače situla matched local ‘Alpine’ material culture and so Situla Art depicts real life.

In this phase of studies, on the basis of its stratigraphy and iconography, the Certosa situla was considered to be the oldest of the three situlas under discussion; thus metalwork production in Bologna was thought to have influenced both the Benvenuti and Vače situlas, although both were thought to show local re-elaborations (Zannoni, 1876, pp. 157–161, note 1; von Hochstetter, 1883, pp. 170–179). Von Hochstetter (1883, pp. 170–179) identified Hallstatt, Italic and Orientalising influences on the decoration of the Vače situla, the latter two possibly mediated through Etruria as the Umbrians were considered to be closely related to the ‘Alpines’ in this archaeological phase. The Hallstatt influence was recognised in the naturalism of the animals depicted, which is also characteristic of the Italic artistic tradition. The zoning, the row-like arrangement, the themes (e.g., chariots and charioteers, hunting



and war scenes, fighters), the fantastic animals and the exotic trees were ascribed to east Mediterranean influence (i.e., Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek). For Zannoni (1876, pp. 137–161), Bologna was a primary vector of the latter influence; moreover, he argued that Situla Art predated the beginning of the Orientalising period and so objects which showed Orientalising characteristics should be considered later in date. He therefore argued that one of the oldest situlas was that found at Sesto Calende (Biondelli, 1867, pl. II), as it shows a narrative pattern displayed in geometric taste, while the most recent was the Benvenuti situla (Zannoni, 1876, pp. 137–161).

Discussion not only centred on the origin and influences on Situla Art, but also on the chronology and interpretation of the depictions. Using the Certosa situla as a case-study, Zannoni (1876, pp. 137–161) suggested that Situla Art objects might have been family heirlooms produced some time before being buried as grave goods. The date of the grave does not therefore match the date of the Situla Art object/s deposited in it (Zannoni, 1876, pp. 140–143). This is an important point to stress as most of the Situla Art objects known to date come from funerary contexts (Zaghetto, 2006, p. 43; see also Online Resource 1). On the other hand, Zannoni (1876, pp. 134–137) suggested that the decoration on the Certosa situla depicted real life and was thus able to offer insights regarding Umbrian dress, costume and social classes. There were three social classes according to Chierici (1880, pp. 100–101): the ‘town people’, the ‘farm people’ and the ‘forest people’, forming a hierarchical social arrangement of the local community.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Ghirardini (1888, 1893, 1897, 1901) published four seminal works on Situla Art. Although generally ignored in the literature because it mainly deals with Atestine votive offerings found at the sanctuary of Este-Baratella, Ghirardini’s (1888) book was crucial in laying out the foundations for his later contributions on Situla Art. In it, he identified a relationship between Situla Art and the decorated metal votive plaques found at Este-Baratella (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 182–183); provided a catalogue of 51 Situla Art objects (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 183–188)—only 13 had been listed by Zannoni (1876, pp. 137–140, 157–161, note 1, pl. XXXV, nos. 6–7, 54–69, and pl. XXXVI, nos. 1–2); used the term ‘*arte delle situle*’ (Situla Art) for the first time in the literature (Ghirardini, 1888, p. 188) as he considered situlas as the most important evidence of this artistic tradition; and suggested a date, origin and development for Situla Art (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 188–200). Moreover, thanks to associated rich grave goods, Ghirardini (1888, p. 198) suggested that Situla Art was a high-end production destined for the elite.

Specifically, using stratigraphical and archaeological data, art style, and evidence of ancient repairs, Ghirardini (1888, pp. 188–190) suggested that the Benvenuti situla had to be dated between the late sixth and the early fifth century BC. The grave where it was found, stratigraphically located at the transition between Este phases II and III (Prosdocimi, 1880, pp. 85–86, 91; 1882, p. 26), had to be dated no later than the mid fifth century BC (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 189–190). On the basis of stylistic observations and associated grave goods, he also suggested that the Certosa situla was to be dated to the second half of the fifth century BC and the Arnoaldi situla to the second half of the fourth century BC—both were found in Bologna (Ghirardini, 1888, p. 190). Moreover, on stylistic grounds, he suggested that the Vače situla had to be dated to some point

between the two Bologna situlas (Ghirardini, 1888, p. 190). Ghirardini's (1888, p. 191) chronology reversed Zannoni's (1876, pp. 137–140) hypothesis that Situla Art was only affected by Orientalising influence at a later stage. He suggested that Situla Art objects were a local production and the Benvenuti situla was the oldest decorated situla (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 197–198). Local artisans were able to produce geometric decoration on sheet-bronze artefacts; alone, or helped by foreign craftsmen, they were able to incorporate Greek and Orientalising motifs (Ghirardini, 1888, pp. 197–198).

According to Ghirardini (1893, pp. 203, 209; 1901, p. 219; see also Pigorini, 1887), the situla as a form was introduced to Italy by the Phoenicians and attested in Etruria from the eighth century BC. From Etruria, it crossed the Apennines into the Po Plain, where situla workshops are found first at Bologna, and then at Este (Ghirardini, 1893, pp. 222, 229). Specifically, it was from Bologna that the situla, as a form, was introduced to Este (Ghirardini, 1901, pp. 208, 219); he also suggested that there was a third situla workshop in Slovenia at Santa Lucia di Tolmino/Most na Soči (Ghirardini, 1893, p. 251). He argued that during Este phase II, decorated situlas started to be produced in Este; they showed a striking geometric taste which Ghirardini (1888, pp. 191–192; 1897, pp. 58–60; 1901, pp. 208–209, 220) suggested was borrowed from Bologna and the Villanovan culture, but was only used to decorate bronzes at Este. According to Ghirardini (1897, pp. 53–57; 1901, p. 220), geometric decorated situlas, most probably produced at Este, had a vast diffusion reaching central and northern Europe.

He claimed that it was at the transition between Este phases II and III, the date of the Benvenuti situla—which Ghirardini (1901, pp. 213–214; cf. 1888, pp. 188–190) eventually attributed to the second half of the sixth century BC—that the Orientalising influence which inspired Situla Art reached the Veneto. Following von Hochstetter (1883), Ghirardini (1888, pp. 190–197; 1901, pp. 167–215) suggested that this eastern artistic influence had a Greek origin, and reached the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy in the seventh century BC. It crossed the Apennines only a century later, as suggested by the oldest Situla Art evidence found at Bologna (i.e., the Certosa situla), which Ghirardini (1901, p. 210; cf. 1888, p. 190) eventually dated to the end of the sixth/early fifth century BC. This model led Ghirardini (1901, pp. 209–215 and references therein) to suggest the possibility that Greek, specifically Ionian, influence reached the Veneto via the Adriatic Sea, although this claim had no archaeological support.

Writing in 1923, Ducati (1923, p. 71) still shared Ghirardini's idea that the Adriatic was the route by which Situla Art know-how reached the Veneto, and also Istria, especially in the earliest phases of its production. On the other hand, the role of Bologna had to be reconsidered, at least for the fifth century BC onwards. Ducati (1923, pp. 71–73) claimed that the Certosa situla (see Fig. 1a), which he (Ducati, 1923, p. 67) dated to around 500 BC, showed, in fact, the superiority in style, composition and execution of the local production compared to nearby areas, including Este, which adopted a typical Bologna motif from this phase on, i.e., the human leg hanging from the jaw of a beast.

## A 'Dark Age'

Capuis (2001, p. 199) suggested that there was a long phase of stagnation in Situla Art studies between Ghirardini's (1888; 1893; 1897; 1901) work and 1961–1962 when an itinerant Situla Art exhibition was held in Padua, Vienna and Ljubljana (*Arte delle situle*, 1961; *Situlenkunst*, 1962; Kastlic, 1962). Frey (1969, p. 5) claims that this gap was mostly caused by the two World Wars and their outcomes which led to the scattering and/or inaccessibility of Situla Art finds for a long time. As noted by Fogolari (1976, p. 62), some crucial works were published during this 'dark age' phase, but they only assumed importance in the debate at a later stage, in particular thanks to the above-mentioned Situla Art exhibition. Although the literature recognises it as a turning point which provided new momentum to Situla Art studies (e.g., Frey, 1969, p. 1; Fogolari, 1976, pp. 62–64; 1980, p. 7; Capuis, 2001, pp. 199–200; Sassatelli, 2013, p. 99), it is important to remark that the situation had already started to change in the mid 1950s (see Starè, 1955; Kastelic, 1956; Bermond Montanari, 1960).

## A Ground-Breaking Exhibition and the 'Peak' of Situla Art Studies

The 1961–1962 Situla Art exhibition was born 'almost by chance' (Fogolari, 1980, p. 7) but for the first time gathered together scholars from both south and north of the Alps to discuss the phenomenon (the exhibition title was chosen by the Italians; Gabrovec, 1980, p. 143). The exhibition catalogue provided not only an updated distribution map listing 26 sites and around 50 objects (*Arte delle situle*, 1961, pp. xvi–xvii; Fogolari et al., 1961, pp. 81–112) but also insights on crucial Situla Art themes: its origin, development, and meaning. Unfortunately, the exact number of objects listed in the Situla Art exhibition catalogue cannot be calculated due to the poor preservation of some objects (e.g., Mechel; Fogolari, et al., 1961, p. 102 and pl. 29, no. 39) and their recycling in ancient times to produce votive offerings (e.g., Este-Caldevigo; Fogolari et al., 1961, p. 114 and pl. 43, no. 58; for an update on this matter see Saccoccio, 2021). Interestingly, Frey (1969, p. 60) suggested that sometimes this process might have been very quick, taking place not long after Situla Art objects were produced.

Following von Merhart (1952), Gabrovec (1961, pp. 3–5) suggested that Situla Art is mainly the product of the convergence of two influences. On the one hand, Urnfield toreutic, in which the situla form was already known (i.e., the Kurd and Hajdu Böszörmény situla types) and decoration has a geometric taste. On the other hand, Orientalising influence, specifically Proto-Corinthian art mediated through Italy, provided the peculiar anthropomorphic narrative language. He argued that the date of this convergence is the seventh century BC, the phase when the oldest Situla Art objects were produced: the Benvenuti situla and the Magdalenska gora helmet (Gabrovec, 1961, p. 5). Oddly, Gabrovec (1961, pp. 5–6) suggested it was the artists' background, and not the elite's taste and power to attract itinerant artists, that was the primary factor in the development of Situla

Art. Although it developed differently from area to area, Gabrovec (1961, p. 7) argued that Situla Art depictions display local life.

Fogolari (1961; see also 1975, pp. 124–132; 1988, pp. 83–99) tackled Situla Art from a more *Ex Oriente Lux* viewpoint. Following Ghirardini (1893), she suggested that the situla was in origin an Oriental form (Fogolari, 1961, p. 11) and, although also known in Central Europe, she did not believe that the latter had a major influence on Situla Art. Hence, she argued that the geometric influence and the ‘bird motif’ found in Situla Art are linked to Etruscan traditions and not to Urnfield models (Fogolari, 1961, pp. 11–15). The Veneto, which she suggested was the earliest area with Situla Art objects, was influenced by a Greek artistic wave which led to the introduction into the local artistic *repertoire* of exotic plants, feasting and parade scenes, and real and fantastic animals which then became typical of Situla Art depictions (Fogolari, 1961, pp. 19–21). Fogolari (1961, p. 22) drew on Kastelic (1956, p. 3) and suggested that Orientalising models could have reached the Veneto via three possible routes: (1) through the Danube valley, (2) the Balkans or (3) the Adriatic Sea. She considered the absence of Situla Art objects in the Bologna area until the fifth century BC (i.e., the Certosa situla) to be evidence that Orientalising influence was not mediated through Tyrrhenian Etruria (Fogolari, 1961, p. 21). This opinion was shared by Mansuelli (1964), but, on the other hand, Kastelic (1961, pp. 38, 61) placed major emphasis on the role played by the Etruscan world as the mediator of Mediterranean influence then found in Situla Art. For him, as also suggested by Gabrovec (1961; see discussion above), Situla Art combined the situla as a form of Urnfield origin with Mediterranean decorative influences. Indeed, the investigation of these two components became a *leitmotiv* in subsequent Situla Art studies (see discussion below).

Kastelic (1961, p. 61) suggested that Situla Art depicts real life and divided Situla Art production into four stylistic phases: the first stylistic phase, the second stylistic phase, archaic realism, and, finally, persistences and derivations (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 35–60). His first phase was characterised by a marked Urnfield/geometric taste (e.g., the Sesto Calende and Kleinklein situlas) denoting the strong resistance of local communities to the full incorporation of the Orientalising narrative style into their Situla Art production (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 35–37). His second phase, embodied in the Benvenuti situla, shows the predominance of the Orientalising tradition, mediated through the Etruscan world, in Situla Art production (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 37–40). Only a marginal role was played by Urnfield tradition whose characteristic dots are now used as decorative elements, separating friezes and/or providing plasticity to depicted figures (Kastelic, 1961, p. 37). His third phase sees two main production areas, one centred on Vače, the other on Este (Kastelic, 1961, p. 44–51). He attributed the Vače situla, ‘a monument of the “princely civilization”...’ of sixth to fifth century BC Europe, to the first area (Kastelic, 1961, p. 55). The Certosa situla, the ‘queen of situlas’, was produced in the Po Plain (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 54, 57, 61). His fourth phase was characterised by the use of incision alone, or mostly incision, to produce Situla Art decorations (e.g., the Arnoaldi, Valična vas and Kuffarn situlas); this is also the phase when he suggested that decorated bronze votive plaques were produced in the Veneto (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 40–41, 61).

Kromer (1961; see also Kromer, 1964) provided chronological insights concerning Situla Art production, even though he dated Situla Art objects on the basis of associated grave goods. Following Gabrovec (1960), Kromer (1961, pp. 24–27, 30) dated the Benvenuti situla to around 600 BC and the mature phase of Situla Art, Kastelic's (1961) 'archaic realism', to 500–400 BC. In this phase, contra Kastelic (1961; see discussion above), Kromer (1961, pp. 26–27) suggested that Situla Art production centres were located at Bologna, in Slovenia, in the Alpine valleys, and in Carniola, but not at Este. A 'school' at Este is suggested in the subsequent phase, which he dated to the fourth century BC, when only Situla Art objects decorated by incision are attested (Kromer, 1961, pp. 28–29).

According to Fogolari (1976, pp. 62–63), the Situla Art exhibition catalogues led to the spread of the label 'Situla Art' in the literature; it became the umbrella term under which all Situla Art objects are now identified. The publication, also in 1962, of a seminal work on Situla Art by Lucke and Frey (1962) was the perfect coincidence which consolidated the (re-)flowering of Situla Art studies from this point (Mansuelli, 1969, p. 105; Gabrovec, 1980, pp. 144–145). Lucke and Frey's (1962, pp. III–V) book was based on Lucke's PhD thesis; his sudden death in 1942 during the Second World War delayed publication until Frey decided to work on it and get it published. The volume was submitted for publication in May 1961 (Lucke & Frey, 1962, p. V); the Situla Art exhibition opened to the public in Padua in October 1961 (Mansuelli, 1962, p. 115). It also helped that Frey (1969) published another seminal book on Situla Art only a few years later, together with a number of papers on single Situla Art objects (Frey, 1962, 1966a, 1966b).

The two books, the first by Lucke and Frey (1962) and the second by Frey (1969), are generally flagged in the literature as having provided a revised catalogue of Situla Art objects and an updated distribution map (Capuis, 2001, pp. 201–202); they still are fundamental catalogues for scholars investigating Situla Art (see Online Resource 1). Lucke and Frey (1962, p. 4) attributed Situla Art to a specific Indo-European group, the Illyrians. Furthermore, they argued that the Orientalising aspects of Situla Art were a result of Etruscan influence (Lucke & Frey, 1962, pp. 37, 48; Frey, 1969, pp. 62–81). Greek influence through the Adriatic was indicated by the motif of 'the wild goat depicted without beard' which is not found in Etruria but is present at Bologna whence it possibly passed to Este (Frey, 1969, p. 78 and references therein). Likewise, the motif of the 'goats/wild goats on the tree of life' was also not recorded in Etruria (Frey, 1969, pp. 77–78 and references therein).

Following Müller-Karpe's (1959) chronological framework for the Este culture, Frey (1969, pp. 24, 43) dated the beginning of Situla Art production at Este to Este phase II late (second half of the seventh century BC) through the decorated lid discovered in grave 187 in the Rebato cemetery. He argued that Este was probably the place where Orientalising influences, mediated through the Etruscan and possibly the Adriatic world, converged (Frey, 1969, p. 87). They considered the Benvenuti situla, dated to the late seventh/early sixth century BC (i.e., at the transition between Este phases II–III; Frey, 1969, pp. 18, 24), to be the expression of a mature local artistic environment able to depict real life, re-elaborating Greek models (Frey, 1969, p. 87; Lucke & Frey, 1962, p. 48). They therefore analysed the figures depicted according to their constituent parts, i.e., shape, dress, hairstyle, and

they argued for the presence of socio-political and gender differentiations in Situla Art motifs (Lucke & Frey, 1962, pp. 9–16). Gender studies in Situla Art have only recently undergone a revival (see Barfield, 1998; Schaller, 2019). The presence in the late seventh century BC of isolated Situla Art objects in northern Italy and in the east Hallstatt district, led Frey (1969, p. 87) to suggest the presence of a large area affected by Orientalising influences as a result of interaction with the Etruscans. He also suggested the hypothesis of itinerant artisans for this archaeological phase. Lucke and Frey (1962, p. 51; see also Frey, 1969, p. 43) posited that the main Situla Art productive centres were at Este and Bologna, the latter possibly set up by an ‘Illyrian’ artisan; other workshops were to be recognised at least in the Magdalenenberg, possibly both at Vače and Magdalenska gora, and in the Brenner area.

Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, Di Filippo (1967; Di Filippo Balestrazzi, 1980) tried to lend support to the *Ex Oriente Lux* argument suggested by Fogolari (1961). She tried to play down the role of Etruscan and Greek inputs to Situla Art in favour of a major role played by Levantine influences transmitted by the east–west migration of ancient groups (possibly the Sigynni) through the Danube/Balkans route. Her argument is, however, very flimsy, and not well supported either archaeologically or historically.





On the other hand, the most influential paper on Situla Art of the 1980s was written by Colonna (1980). Around 1970, the restoration of the grave goods from the so-called *Tomba degli Ori* (grave of gold artefacts), found at Bologna-Arsenale Militare in the late nineteenth century (Gozzadini, 1875), led to the discovery of Situla Art decoration on a particular bronze object, a *tintinnabulum* (i.e., a bronze bell; Morigi Govi, 1971). Thanks to the presence in the grave of an imported Corinthian alabaster, Colonna (1980, p. 184) suggested a date around 630–620 BC for the *tintinnabulum*. Hence, following Frey (1969, p. 24) who dated the Benvenuti situla around 600 BC, Colonna (1980, pp. 178–190) suggested that the *tintinnabulum* offered sound confirmation of the major role played by Bologna in the formation of Situla Art. He claimed that ‘... in conclusion, ... it is now a given that the *tintinnabulum* is earlier than all the embossed bronzes known so far from Este’ (Colonna, 1980, p. 184). Colonna (1980, p. 178, note 4) was well aware that Coretti Irdi (1975, p. 163) had suggested a higher date for the Benvenuti situla, i.e., 630 BC, but he dismissed her dating, noting that the motif of the row of rosettes found on the neck of the situla had long currency and was attested at least until the beginning of the sixth century BC. Colonna must also have known that Frey (1969, pp. 24, 43) dated the lid from grave 187 found in the Rebatò cemetery, the oldest Situla Art production in Este, to the second half of the seventh century BC.

According to Colonna (1980, pp. 184–189), the decoration on the *tintinnabulum* provided models for the Benvenuti situla (e.g., seats, figures in profile, exotic plants used to fill space); they were Orientalising models mediated through Tyrrhenian Etruria (see also Camporeale, 1984) or Bologna itself. Interestingly, Morigi Govi (1971, p. 224) had suggested that, at least in part, Verucchio could have influenced Bologna, which lent support to the Adriatic hypothesis. She also looked to Chiusi to find the know-how for the production of the *tintinnabulum* (Morigi Govi, 1971, p. 224). Colonna (1980, pp. 186–190) made the same argument and proposed that the route by which the Etruscan script reached the Veneto in the sixth century BC

was the same as that followed at the end of the seventh century by ‘the artisans who reached Este to produce the first decorated situlas...’ (Colonna, 1980, p. 190). This route, corroborated by epigraphical and artistic evidence, linked Chiusi to Bologna and Bologna to Este. According to Colonna (1980, p. 180), due to the static figurative language of Situla Art, if ‘a genuine Oriental component exists..., *sensu* Di Filippo [1967], it is at this moment in time... that it has to be located’. Moreover, the movement of skilled north-Etruscan artisans required both Bologna and Este to exert huge attraction in this phase (Colonna, 1980, pp. 181–182 and references therein). He argued that decorated Situla Art objects assume a particular socio-economic and political value in a ‘gift-exchange network’ (*sensu* Mauss, 1966) set up by the emerging elite located between northern Italy and the eastern Alps, indicating common interests and solidarity from this phase (Colonna, 1980, p. 182 and note 11). An example was provided by the Providence situla, likely found at the Bologna-Certosa cemetery (Lucke & Frey, 1962, p. 1; see also Sassatelli, 2018, pp. 358–359 and references therein), which bears on its rim an inscription possibly in alpine Rhaetic script (Colonna, 1980, p. 182). Colonna (1980, p. 182 and reference therein) argued that the Providence situla was most probably a gift given to a member of the Bologna elite. The pattern seemed to change in the sixth century BC when, according to Colonna (1980, p. 181 and references therein), the ‘best artisans of the “second generation” ... move[d] from Este to Slovenian aristocratic courts where later on situlas such as those of Vače and Magdalenska [g]lora would be produced’. This is explained through a decline in wealth in central Europe and north-east Italy while Slovenia seems to show a peak in wealth in this phase.

In the mid-1990s, Mason (1996, p. 115) claimed that ‘[t]he major failing of all the... [previous] models is that they neglect the internal chronology of “Situla Art” itself’. More recently, Zaghetto (2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2017, 2022), who adopts a structuralist approach borrowed from semiotics, has addressed this issue. Using a table of associations, he proposed a new chronological framework for Situla Art objects, distinguishing four main ‘stylistic phases’, 1 to 4, dated to between 660/650 and 275 BC (Fig. 4; Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 23–25, 59–62).

According to Zaghetto (2017, p. 24), in phase 1 (660/650–610/600 BC) Situla Art objects show a typical Orientalising taste and the striking stylistic similarity between different objects suggests that both objects and artisans may have moved around. During his phase 2 (610/600–520/510 BC), the decoration still displays a supra-regional language but local techniques (such as the hatching on the Vače situla), and specifically local objects, attested also in part from phase 1, are found (Zaghetto, 2017, p. 24 and note 1). Zaghetto (2017, p. 24; see also Teržan, 2020, pp. 199–201 and references therein) interprets this pattern as related to the circulation of models, sometimes visible in preparatory drawings on the situlas (Buson, 2017 and references therein). Between phases 1 and 2, Zaghetto (2017, pp. 24–25) notes a reduction in floral motifs; more space is given to the human figure which also replaces animals from this phase. Phase 3 (520/510–475/450 BC) sees the progressive regionalisation of Situla Art language which dissolves in phase 4 (475/450–275 BC) (Zaghetto, 2017, p. 24). The progressive decadence of the Situla Art language is also mirrored by the way narrative schemes are conveyed (Zaghetto, 2018). Following Snodgrass’ (1994) analysis of Archaic Greek art, Zaghetto (2018, pp. 242–248) identifies the main use of the ‘synoptic

Zaghetto's (2017: 24-25, 59-62) Situla Art phases		
Plant and face decoration	Relative phases	Absolute chronology (c.)
	Phase 1	660/650 BC a
		630/625 BC b
	Phase 2	610/600 BC a
		550/530 BC b
	Phase 3	520/510 BC a
		500/480 BC b
	Phase 4	475/450 BC a
		425/400 BC b
		350/325 BC c
		275 BC

**Fig. 4** Zaghetto's (2017, pp. 24–25, 59–62) Situla Art stylistic and chronological phases

method' in phases 1 and 2 of Situla Art. This method allows one or more scenes to be depicted with the protagonist shown only once; events are compressed into one, stratified, sequence as in a palimpsest (e.g., the Benvenuti and Certosa situlas; Fig. 1b–a; Zaghetto, 2018, pp. 240–243). In phase 3, motifs depicted start losing narrative consistency and length; this is the phase when the 'cyclic' (the Alpage situla; see Fig. 9b) and 'continuous' (i.e., Castelvetro mirror; see Fig. 8a1) methods of representation are attested (Zaghetto, 2018, pp. 248–249). The first method shows separated scenes, each depicting the protagonist; the latter shows a continuous sequence of scenes (Zaghetto, 2018, p. 240). Finally, phase 4 seems to be characterised by the 'monoscenic method' which, as suggested by the name, shows only one scene with the protagonist depicted once (Zaghetto, 2018, pp. 240, 249). This is the simplest artistic language known in Archaic Greek art.



## What is Situla Art?

Online Resource 1 lists 306 Situla Art objects. Following Zaghetto (2001, 2017, 2022), each Situla Art object is identified by a label generally displaying the first three letters of its findspot, followed by a dot, a letter giving the artefact class of the find (i.e., A=axe; B=belt plate; C=*cista* [cylindrical box]; D=*flabellum* [fan]; E=earring; F=scabbard; H=helmet; J=miniature couch; K=wall plaque; L=lid; M=mirror; P=palette; S=situla; T=*tintinnanbulum* [bronze bell]; U=cauldron; V=bowl; W=generic vessel; X=pyxis; Y=breastplate; Z=generic plate), and a sequential number. Whenever possible, Online Resource 1 also provides: (a) the date of discovery, (b) the context of discovery (i.e., unknown, funerary, hoard, cultic or settlement), (c) the date attributed to the context, and (d) the date which I and/or the literature have attributed to the Situla Art object.

My list (Online Resource 1) starts from the fundamental catalogues published by Lucke and Frey (1962) and Frey (1969) which list a wide range of objects decorated in Situla Art style. Their catalogues amount to 50 objects. I added around 80 further Situla Art objects from the list recently published by Zaghetto (2022, pp. 465–472). I added the rest (around 170 objects) on the basis of a thorough examination of the literature published since the mid nineteenth century, searching for decorated sheet-bronze objects showing affinities with those listed and/or illustrated by Lucke, Frey and Zaghetto. This allowed me to add a new *unicum* (i.e., the wall plaque) to those already listed in the literature. My research also highlighted that scholars have tended to consider the catalogues compiled by Lucke and Frey (1962) and Frey (1969) as ‘sacred texts’, believing that all the Situla Art objects discovered until the late 1960s would be listed there. This is not the case, as is exemplified by the decorated helmet found before 1887 at Forlì-Rio Carpena (Online Resource 1, FOR.H1; see Fig. 2h). Zaghetto (2001, 2017, 2022) decided not to include in his list bronze objects decorated only with floral motifs but he does not provide a reason for this choice. However, I have included such objects because the helmet found at Forlì-Rio Carpena, which has embossed rosettes on its brim, was likely used to display wealth by a high-status individual and helmets decorated with floral motifs are also found at Grandate (Online Resource 1, GRA.H1) and Magdalenska gora (Online Resource 1, MAG.H1). Hence, they, and other objects with floral motifs, should be considered to be Situla Art objects.

In consequence, I propose a new definition of Situla Art. Situla Art is dated to c. 660/650–275 BC and I define it according to four main criteria. It is characterised by (1) bronze sheet/s decorated by embossing and/or engraving but not stamping (see discussion above) which (2) display a consistent Orientalising taste over time. As an inter-regional elite artistic language, Situla Art (3) depicts elite-oriented themes which are shared over a wide area encompassing several cultural zones located (4) between the Apennines, to the south-west, and the Alps, to the north-east. Therefore, in this paper decorated objects showing narrative motifs displayed in Urnfield/geometric taste (e.g., the vessels from Kleinklein, Sesto Calende and Trezzo sull’Adda) are not considered to be Situla Art (see Egg, 2013, p. 448).

## Situla Art Through Time: Origin, Development and Decline

### Chronology

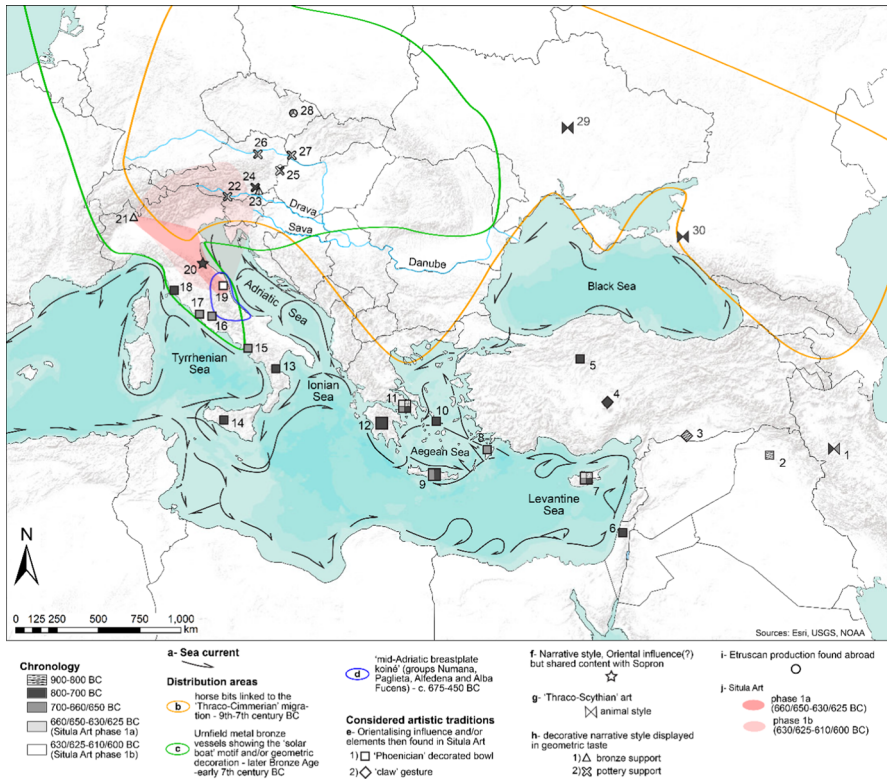
In my catalogue and this discussion I adopt Zaghetto's (2017, pp. 24–25, 59–62) chronology of four phases and relative subphases (see Fig. 4).

### Origin: New Insights?

Colonna's (1980) claim of an Etruscan-inspired origin for Situla Art is still very much shared in the literature. However, his suggestion does not fully explain the role played by Urnfield toreutic in Situla Art and very little is said on the *Ex Oriente Lux* influence *sensu* Fogolari (1961) or Di Filippo (1967). Figure 5 is an attempt at providing new insights on this crucial topic.

The map shows the central-eastern Mediterranean basin and a range of distributions are plotted. The green line marks the distribution area of Urnfield bronze vessels displaying the so-called 'solar boat' motif but also geometric decorative patterns (von Merhart, 1952; Jockenhovel, 1974; Iaia, 2008; Tarbay, 2018). They are dated to between the later Bronze Age and the late eighth/early seventh century BC, with the latter date attributed to the decorated bronze bucket from Rivoli Veronese (Bietti Sestieri, 1976, p. 107). Geometric decorations on bronze vessels are, however, attested at Este (e.g., Este-Casa Alfonsi grave 13; Chieco Bianchi & Calzavara Capuis, 1985, pl. 261, no. 2) at least until the early/late sixth century BC, but these are not Situla Art objects. The orange line plots the distribution area of horse bits linked by Metzner-Nebelsick (2002, pp. 207–294) to the so-called 'Thraco-Cimmerian' migration, dated to the ninth to seventh century BC. The blue line marks the distribution of bronze breastplates showing the motifs which are called in the literature the 'two-headed horse', the 'fantastic horse' and the 'Abruzzi drake horse-bird' (Weidig, 2016, pp. 249, 255), dated to c. 675–450 BC (Tomedi, 2000, pl. 155). Finally, the red line encompasses Situla Art finds dated to Zaghetto's phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC; dark red) and phase 1b (630/625–610/600 BC; light red). The plotted distribution of Situla Art is situated at the outskirts of the other distribution areas; different influences converged there, most probably contributing to the development of this artistic phenomenon.

The reconstructed pattern suggests that at the time of the emergence of Situla Art, i.e., the mid seventh century BC, artisans in central-north Europe and central-north Italy were capable of decorating metal bronze sheets although their taste was geometric. Where did the Orientalising narrative style with its anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and floral motifs come from? And which route/s did it take to reach the Situla Art zone? Moreover, was this influence mediated or did it influence Situla Art directly? The literature suggests three main routes for the diffusion of Orientalising influence from east to west: (1) the Tyrrhenian Sea, (2) the Adriatic Sea, and (3) the river Danube. To provide a sound response to the above queries I have followed Neri's (2001, pp. 27, 30) argument and considered the distribution of the so-called



**Fig. 5** Distribution map plotting later Bronze and early Iron Ages artistic traditions that I argue may have contributed to the emergence of Situla Art. Evidence according to: **a** Milliot and Taupier-Letage (2005, p. 40, fig. 2, p. 49, fig. 3 and p. 51, fig. 4); **b** Metzner-Nebelsick (2002, pp. 207–294); **c** von Merhart (1952), Jockenhövel (1974, p. 30, fig. 5), Iaia (2008, p. 316, fig. 1A), and Tarbay (2018, p. 322, fig. 6); **d** Tomedi (2000, pl. 149–150 and 153); **e1** Markoe (1985), Coen (2012, pp. 209–210), and Vella (2010); **e2** Di Filippino (1967), and Di Filippo Balestrazzi (1980); **f** von Eles (2002a, p. 275); **g** Kossack (1998a); **h1** de Marinis (1974, 2009), Gambari (2016), and Tarpini (2003); **h2** Gleirscher (2009b), and Grömer (2018, pp. 233–234); **i** Chytráček et al. (2019); and **j** Online Resource 1. List of sites and/or districts shown: 1. Ziwiyah, 2. Nimrud, 3. Karkemish, 4. Çiftlik, 5. Ankara, 6. Megiddo, 7. Cyprus (a. Idalion, b. Kourion, c. Amathus, d. Tamassos, e. Armou, f. Palaeophapos), 8. Kameiros, 9. Crete (a. Fortetza, b. Mt Ida, c. Arkades), 10. Rheneia, 11. Beotia and Attica (a. Athens, b. Salamis, c. Perachora, d. Delphi), 12. Arkadia (a. Sparta, b. Olympia), 13. Francavilla Marittima, 14. Sant'Angelo Muxaro, 15. Pontecagnano, 16. Palestrina, 17. Cerveteri, 18. Vetulonia, 19. Belmonte Piceno, 20. Verucchio, 21. Sesto Calende, 22. Frög, 23. Kleinklein, 24. Gleinstätten, 25. Sopron, 26. Reichersdorf, 27. Nové Košariská, 28. Doloplazy, 29. Zhabotin, 30. Kelermes (colour version available online)

'Phoenician' metal decorated bowls *sensu* Markoe (1985). I investigated this class of finds for two main reasons: the decorated vessels are metallic (in bronze or silver), and the decoration displayed shows motifs later found in Situla Art. According to Markoe (1992, p. 61), 'the evidence at hand [i.e., Phoenician decorated bowls] ... testifies authoritatively to the role that the oriental [Phoenician] merchant and craftsman played in this earliest period of trade and artistic development in Italy'. The distribution of 'Phoenician' decorated metal bowls suggests a close connection

between the Levant and Tyrrhenian Etruria at least from the eighth century BC, a period when Urnfield toreutic was still attested. The route followed by these decorated objects, and possibly by Levantine craftsmen, appears pretty clear: Iraq, Lebanon, Cyprus, the Aegean coast, southern Italy stopping off in Calabria and Sicily, as far as Tyrrhenian Etruria (see Fig. 5). This route seems also suggested by the distribution of ninth to seventh-century BC decorated sheet-bronze plaques found between the Levant and Greece (Ohly, 1953; von Merhart, 1954, pl. II, no. 5; Boardman, 1971; Schachner, 2007; Cifarelli et al., 2019). One of the possible outcomes of this latter influence are, for example, the terracottas at the Etruscan site of Murlo, dated to the seventh century BC (Rathje, 2007 and references therein).

A similar route was probably followed by the first Euboean ‘colonists’ who set up the *emporion* at Pithekoussai, present-day Ischia, in the mid eighth century BC, and founded Cumae, on the mainland, a little later (Ridgway, 1992a, 1992b; Livy *History of Rome* 8, 22, 5–6; Foster, 1926, pp. 84–87). They may also have played a role in the diffusion of Orientalising taste in Italy from this phase. This was probably vectored by imported, and then locally produced, pottery vessels whose decoration shows striking parallels in Situla Art (see Ghirardini, 1901, pp. 201–202, figs. 63–64; Frey, 1969, pp. 62–80 and text pls. A–D; Egg, 1992, p. 158, fig. 13; Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 252–263). The link between Greece and Etruria is also illustrated by the episode of the Corinthian merchant Demaratus, who fled to Italy around 657 BC; he settled at Tarquinia with his retinue, including three craftsmen, and was the father of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of Rome (Ridgway, 2012).

To date, there is only one site on the Italian Adriatic coast with a metal (silver in this case) ‘Phoenician’ decorated bowl, grave 88 at Belmonte Piceno. The bowl, unfortunately lost, is dated to the late seventh century BC (Coen, 2012, p. 210 and references therein). Moreover, the ivory pyxides decorated in Orientalising style, with figures distributed in friezes, and the decorated bronze sandals from Campi-Campovalano grave 119, on the Adriatic side of Italy, are of a similar date (late/end of the seventh or early sixth century; Coen, 2012, p. 214; Zanco, 1989, p. 88). Although this might suggest that Orientalising influence on the Adriatic region of Italy is more recent than in Tyrrhenian Etruria, and so influenced Situla Art only in a subsequent phase, we should not forget Verucchio. At this site, the late/end eighth-century BC decorated wooden throne found in Lippi grave 89/1972 suggests that Orientalising influence reached this area in a similar phase as in Tyrrhenian Etruria; 34 eighth-century BC decorated gold plaques found in Attica (28) and Eretria (6) published by Ohly (1953) are a striking parallel for the decoration on the throne. Moreover, on stylistic and chronological grounds, Naso (2000, p. 160) suggested that the decorated helmet found in the grave 31 at Pitino di San Severino Marche-Monte Penna (Online Resource 1, PIT.H1) could be considered ‘a proto-type [for Situla Art], in some ways comparable to the function already attributed by G. Colonna to the bronze *tintinnabulum* found at Felsina [Bologna]’. I consider it to be a Situla Art object and not simply a prototype, because it fulfils the criteria for inclusion. Nevertheless, it has been recently suggested that the class of Adriatic toreutic production, which I labelled as the ‘mid-Adriatic breastplate *koinè*’ in Fig. 5d, derives from Faliscan, Capenate and Etruscan models (Weidig, 2016, pp. 255–257).

In contrast to Situla Art, decorated scenes in these objects used large embossed dots as a consequence of *horror vacui*; animals are generally characterised by small incisions at regular intervals. The overlap between Situla Art and the ‘mid-Adriatic breastplate *koinè*’ at Numana (see Fig. 5) suggests that this was most probably the boundary between the two areas, each showing a different reception of Orientalising influences.

As indicated by Fig. 5, the Danube route is the least likely route for the east–west transmission of Orientalising influences. Most of the examples provided by Di Filippo (1967; Di Filippo Balestrazzi, 1980) have dates that do not fit that of Situla Art, and are either too old or too recent: e.g., the so-called ‘Worshipper of Larsa’, dated to the second millennium BC, and the vessel from Agighiol, Romania, dated to the fourth century BC (Foltiny, 1976). A similar date is also suggested for the decorated plaques found at Letnitsa, Bulgaria, mentioned by Boardman (1971, p. 137). Moreover, recently Capuis et al. (2016, pp. 26–29) contested Di Filippo’s (1980, p. 158) hypothesis concerning the ‘claw gesture’ in Situla Art, i.e., the act of placing the hand in front of the face assuming a claw form, and argued that rather than a ritual gesture whose origin was in Mesopotamia it is likely to be a ‘mimetic gesture’ used to communicate the aroma of the beverage which is going to be prepared and/or served. Furthermore, both the motif depicting a ‘griffin/bird eating a fish’ and the so-called ‘claw gesture’ found in Situla Art, used by Di Filippo (1967; Di Filippo Balestrazzi, 1980) to build her *Ex Oriente Lux* argument, are only attested in present-day Turkey; no evidence of a Danube link with the Alps during the eighth or seventh century BC is documented to date (see Fig. 5). Finally, a clear gap is also documented in the archaeological record between the Black Sea and the Alps in the transmission of Thraco-Scythian art (*sensu* Kossack, 1998a; see Fig. 5).

Two pottery vessels showing narrative decoration found at Sopron (Fig. 5, site 25), Hungary, seem to recall some of the motifs found in Situla Art (e.g., weaving, hunting, musicians and perhaps boxing matches), but the lack of a high-resolution date, i.e., they are dated 800–600 BC (Grömer, 2018, pp. 233–234), means that their role in the emergence and/or development of Situla Art cannot be properly assessed. A similar decoration is also found at other sites of the so-called Kalenderberg cultural group (see Gleirscher, 2009b). According to Egg (2013, p. 471), human motifs on pottery vessels begin to be found at Gleinstätten-Forstwaldgruppe mound 17 (Fig. 5, site 24), Austria, published by Dobiát (1980, pl. 32, no. 11) and dated to around the mid eighth century BC. Then, it is only in the Ha C2 phase, when the first Situla Art production is recorded at Este, that figurative decoration on sheet-bronze emerges in Styria at Kleinklein-Pommerkogel (Fig. 5, site 23) (Egg & Kramer, 2016, p. 230). Egg (2013, p. 471) suggests that the c. 100 years hiatus might be explained by poor preservation or the lack of a scientific excavation of Hartnermichelkogen 1 and 2, the oldest princely graves found at Kleinklein, the first of which is dated to the beginning of the Ha C1b phase (late/end of the eighth century BC), and the latter to the developed Ha C1b phase (first half of the seventh century BC) (Egg & Kramer, 2016, pp. 239–240).

On the basis of the motif displaying embossed rosettes found on metal vessels at Kleinklein-Pommerkogel, Egg and Kramer (2016, p. 240; see also Egg, 2013, pp. 448–449) suggest that this decoration might have crossed the Alps thanks to

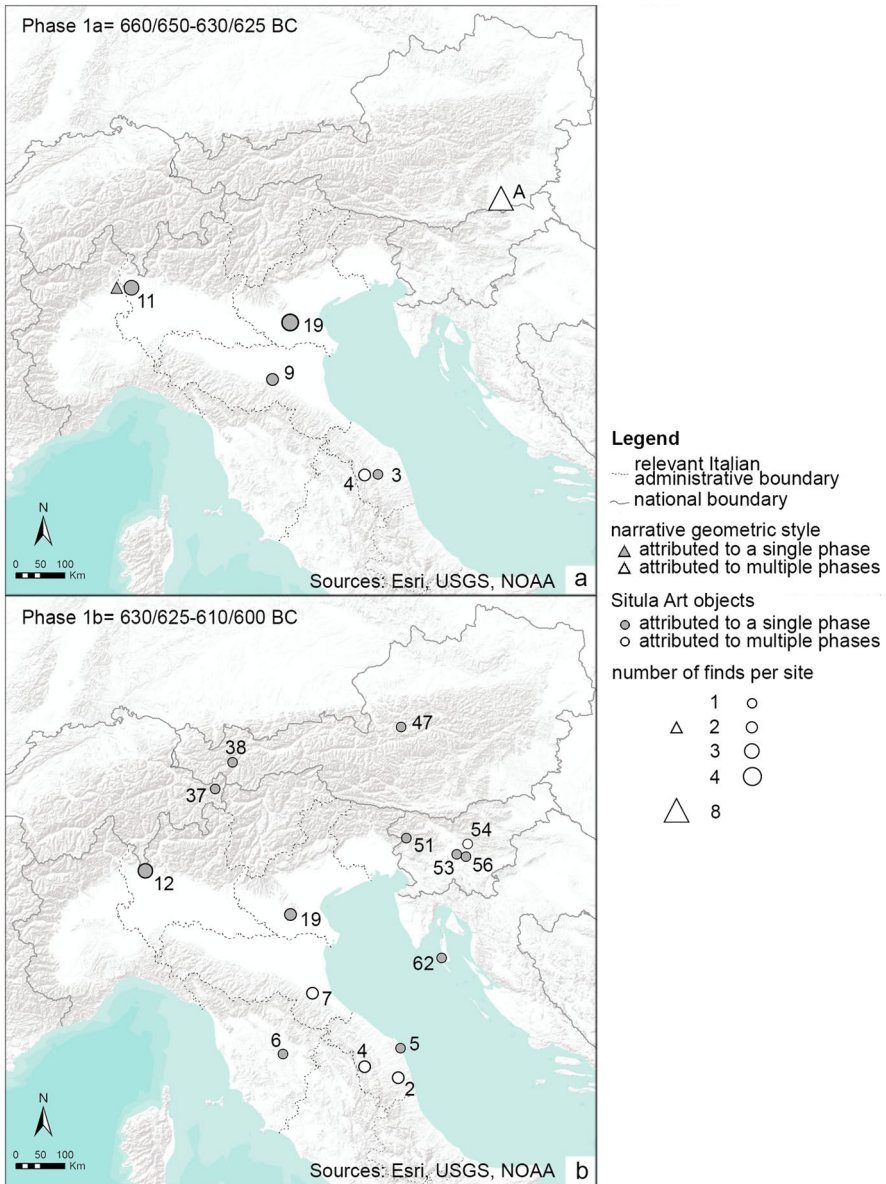
**Fig. 6** Situla Art phase maps according to Online Resource 1. List of sites shown: A. Kleinklein-Pom-merkogel and Kröllkogel, B. Trezzo sull'Adda, 1. Campi-Campovalano, 2. Grottazzolina, 3. Pitino di San Severino Marche, 4. Matelica, 5. Numana, 6. Castelnuovo Berardenga-Poggione, 7. Forlì, 8. Castelvetro, 9. Bologna, 10. Spina, 11. Sesto Calende, 12. Grandate, 13. Caravaggio, 14. Bagnolo San Vito-Forcello, 15. Gazzo Veronese, 16. Oppeano, 17. Montagnana, 18. Carceri, 19. Este, 20. Padua, 21. Montebello Vicentino, 22. Vicenza, 23. Montebelluna, 24. Mel, 25. Caverzano, 26. Pieve d'Alpago, 27. Calalzo di Cadore-Lagole, 28. Rovereto, 29. Mechel, 30. Sanzeno, 31. Vadena, 32. Laives/Leifers, 33. Eppan, 34. Moritzing, 35. Lothen/Campolino, 36. Vintl, 37. Scuol, 38. Fließ, 39. Pillerhöhe, 40. Oberperfuss, 41. Aldrans, 42. Volders-Himmelreich Wattens, 43. Welzelach, 44. Matrei, 45. Möderndorf, 46. Dürrnberg, 47. Hallstatt, 48. Kuffarn, 49. Waisenberg, 50. Kobarid/Caporetto, 51. Most na Soči/Santa Lucia di Tolmino, 52. Molnik, 53. Magdalenska gora, 54. Vače, 55. Zagorje, 56. Stična, 57. Valična vas, 58. Brezje, 59. Novo Mesto, 60. Dolenjske Toplice, 61. Nesactium, 62. Osor (colour version available online)

Este craftsmen who brought it from north Etruria. They also suggest that interaction between Kleinklein and northern Italy, specifically Verucchio, should have dated at least from the late eighth century BC when ‘there seems to have been an active exchange between the two centres, which was probably of essential importance in the genesis of the Kleinklein centre of power’ (Egg & Kramer, 2016, p. 240). This interaction could have also led to the adoption of eastern motifs mediated through northern Italy by other groups settled around Kleinklein: the motifs depicted on the Sopron vessels seem, for example, to have close parallels with the decoration on the wooden throne found at Verucchio (see Huth & Kondziella, 2017). On the other hand, the ‘stick men’ depicted on the vessel from the mid-eighth century BC Gleinstätten-Forstwaldgruppe mound 17 (Egg, 2013, p. 471 and references therein) show quite a different taste from those recorded at Sopron and might be considered a local artistic tradition. The possibility that Etruscan figurative art continued to exert influence across the Alps in the seventh century BC is suggested by a sheet-copper decorated breastplate found at Doloplazy, Czech Republic. The object, albeit found in the ploughsoil, is dated to this period by Chytráček et al. (2019, p. 218) who also suggest that it is of Etruscan production. The evolution of the figurative art at Kleinklein seems to suggest influences from central and northern Italy and Greece but also local independent developments by the presence of the Urnfield geometric style and the absence of mythological and/or exotic animals (e.g., the sphinx and the lion) (Egg, 2013, pp. 455, 460; see also Egg & Kramer, 2016, pp. 236–237).

## Spread and Decline

Of the 306 Situla Art objects listed in Online Resource 1, 284 were dated using Zaghetto’s (2017, pp. 59–62) stylistic phases and/or following the date suggested in the literature. This means that c. 93% of them are displayed in the following distribution maps. The distribution maps also plot the bronze objects with narrative motifs in geometric style found at Kleinklein, Sesto Calende and Trezzo sull’Adda which I do not consider to be Situla Art as they do not fit the criteria adopted for Situla Art; the aim is to gather insights on both these artistic phenomena and to try to understand reciprocal influences over time.

In the light of the distribution pattern and the number of finds recorded per phase, Este seems to be a centre of primary importance for the entire period considered



(Fig. 6, site 19). In Situla Art phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC; Fig. 6a), Este seems to be the place where geometric and Orientalising influences converge. Este-Benvenuti grave 122 is an emblematic example: a Situla Art bowl depicting a goat grazing plants (Online Resource 1, EST.V1; Fig. 2e) was found together with a decorated bronze situla with geometric patterns (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pl. 141, nos. 1–2). The situla is similar to those from Sesto Calende and Kleinklein, which Gambari (2016, p. 161) and Tarpini (2003, p. 187) date to a similar phase (see also Egg

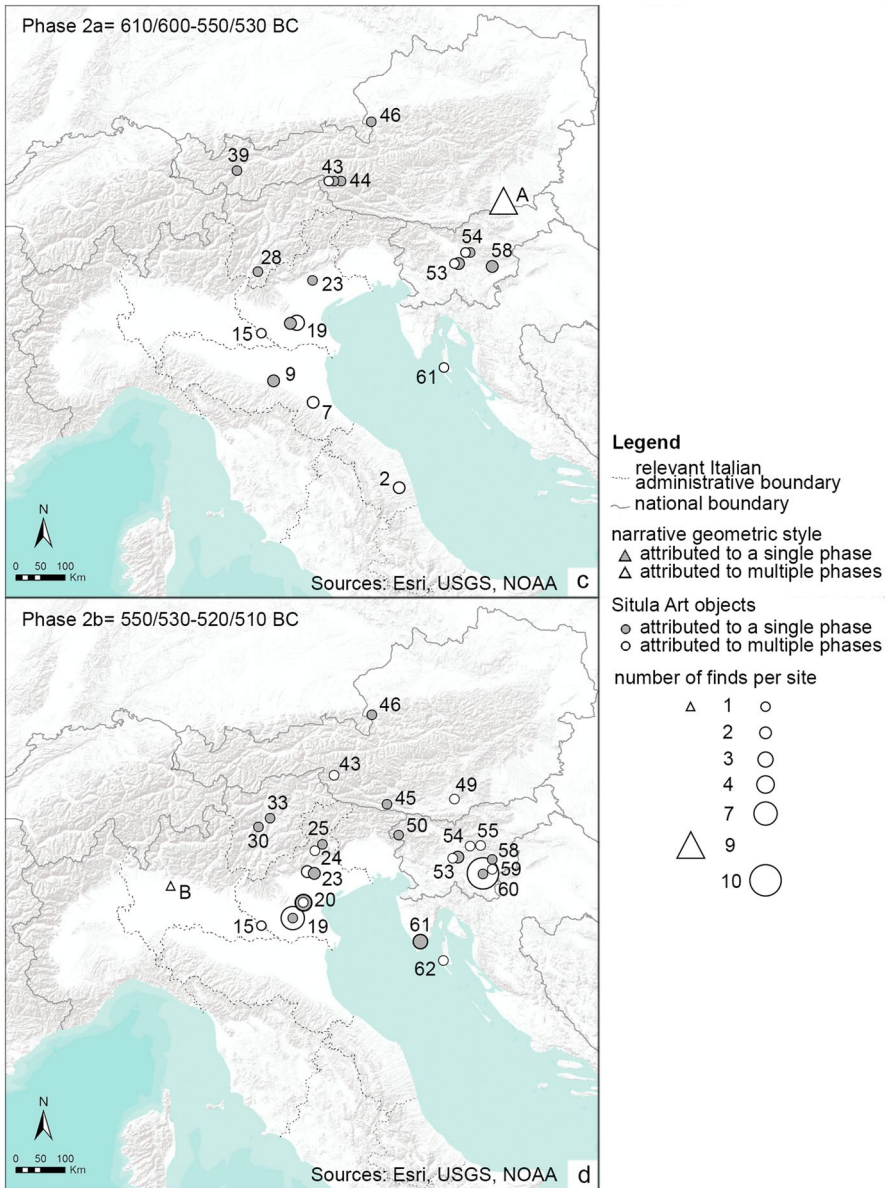


Fig. 6 (continued)

& Kramer, 2016). The bowl found in Este-Benvenuti grave 122, although displaying an Orientalising theme, i.e., the grazing goat, also attests geometric taste in filling the animal and the plants with oblique parallel lines and displaying a row of zeds. This peculiar geometric decoration has parallels in the whole area of distribution of the Urnfield torcotic (von Merhart, 1952, pls. 3–10, 12–13 & 23). Following Naso



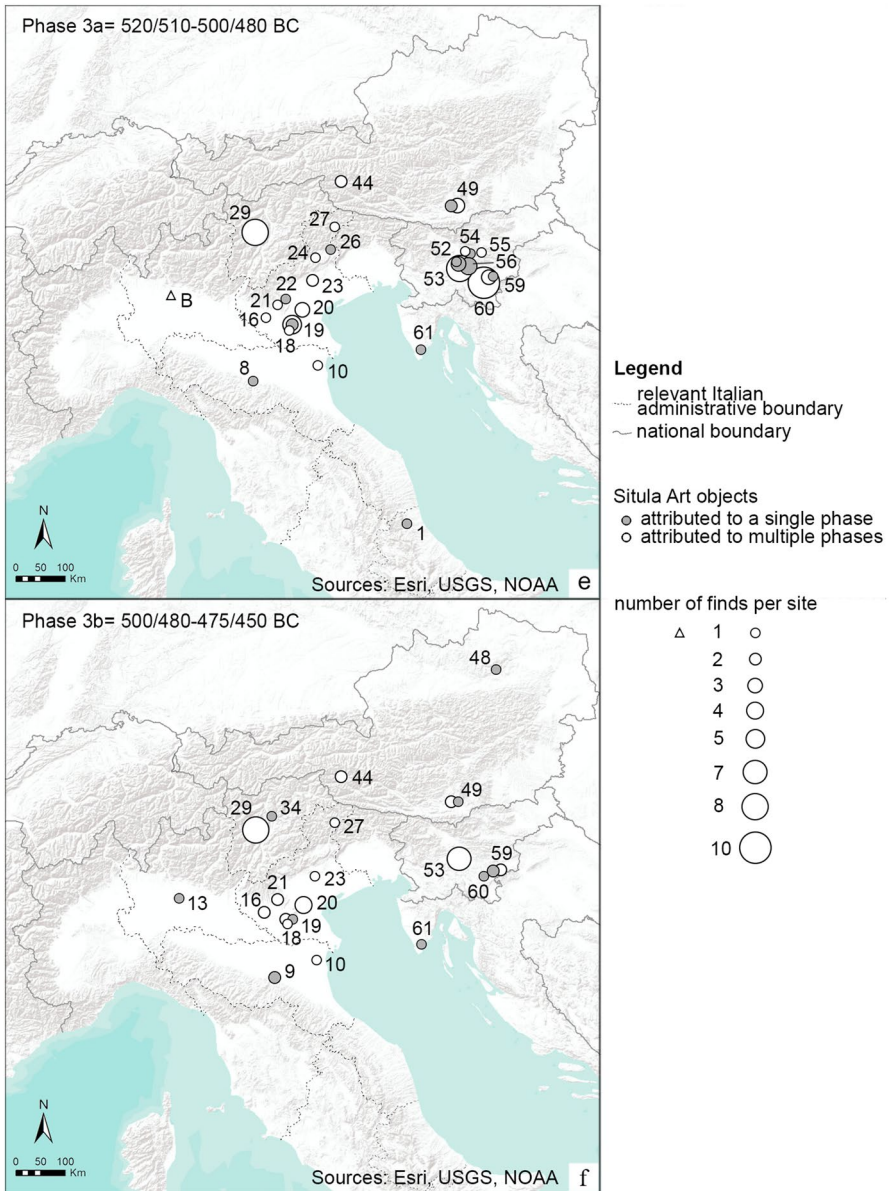


Fig. 6 (continued)

(2000, p. 160), this may attest an ‘experimentation’ phase, when local communities tried to incorporate foreign models into their artistic repertoire; this phenomenon seems to be documented in most of the Po Plain, although we have to consider that other influences affected the same period and geographical area. No Situla

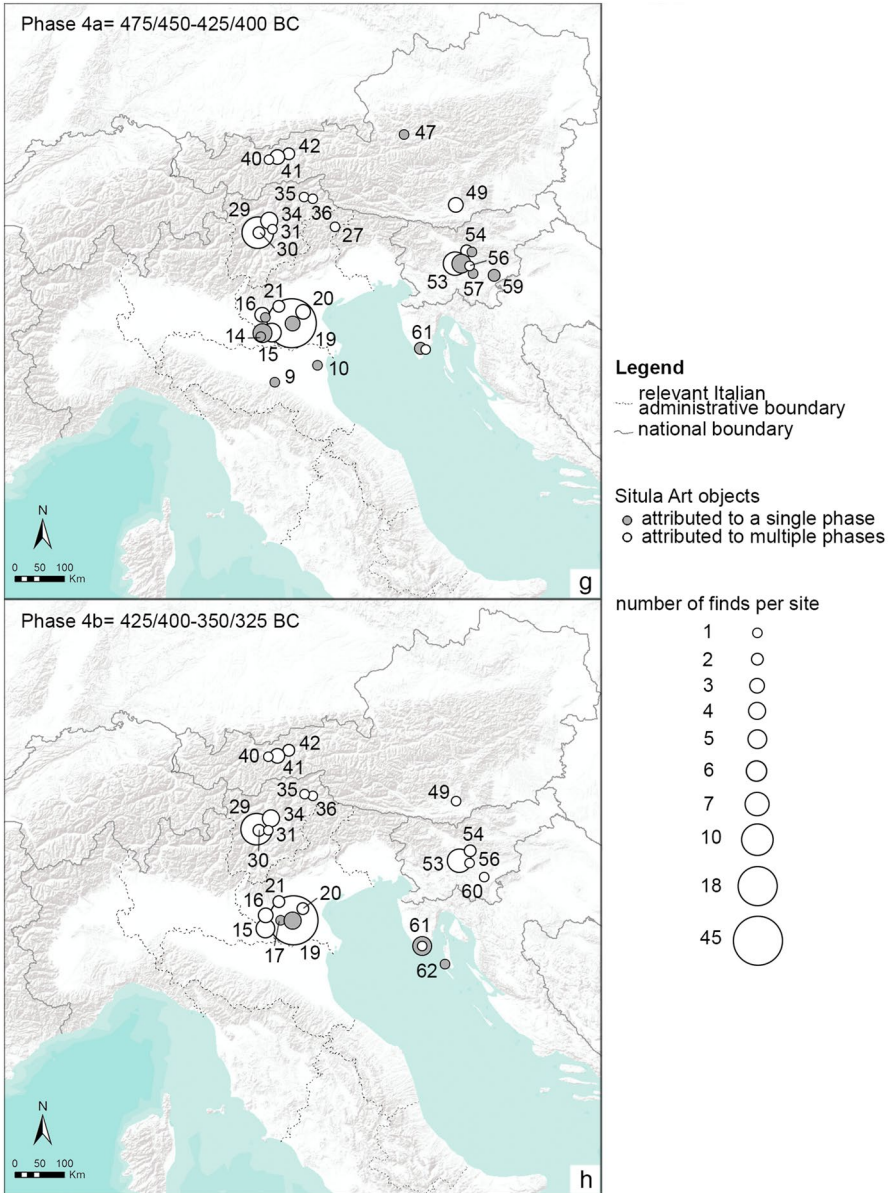


Fig. 6 (continued)

Art objects are recorded north of the Alps in Situla Art phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC); therefore, we may label this phase as ‘Po Plain experimentation’.

Figure 6b shows that, via Situla Art, Este seems to have played a major role in setting up a common elite-based language able to cross cultural boundaries. We can label Situla Art phase 1b (630/625–610/600 BC) as ‘the emergence of a shared

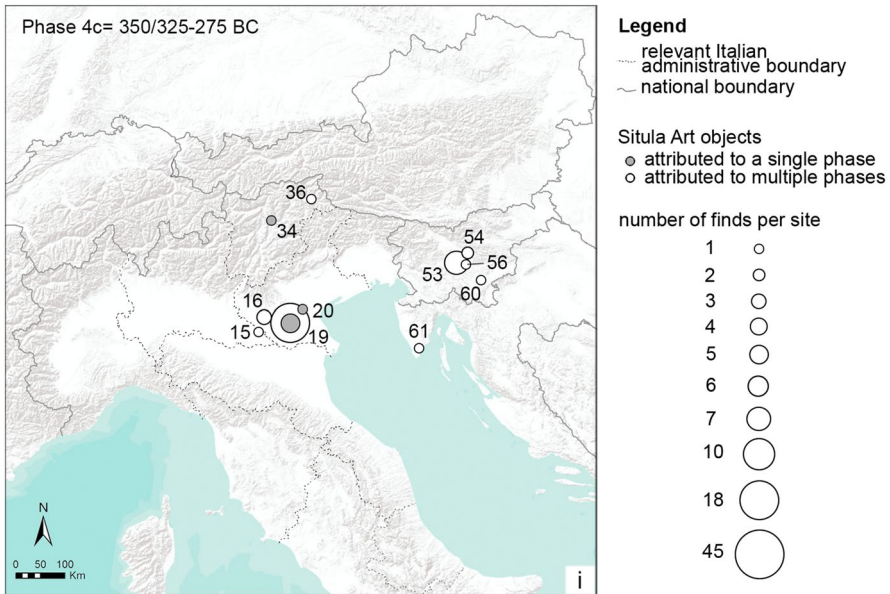


Fig. 6 (continued)

East-Alpine elite language’. Interestingly, narrative motifs in geometric style are still found in this phase. The last remnants of this artisanal tradition are found in Situla Art phase 2b/3a (550/530–500/480 BC), documented by the Trezzo sull’Adda situla (de Marinis, 1974, pl. 1, nos. 1, 3; 2009, p. 178) and the bronze decorated couch found at Eberdingen-Hochdorf (Biel & Keefer, 2021 and references therein). As with the bronze decorated finds recovered at Kleinklein (Egg, 2013, pp. 448–449; Egg & Kramer, 2016, p. 240), it has been suggested that the decorated couch found at Eberdingen-Hochdorf was inspired by Etruscan products (Löhlein, 2021, pp. 147–148).

From Situla Art phase 2b (550/530–520/510 BC; Fig. 6d), significant concentrations of Situla Art objects might point to the presence of local Situla Art workshops also outside the Po Plain, specifically in Slovenia. It is likely that workshops were located where there are concentrations of Situla Art, and I have used the presence of seven or more Situla Art objects per phase per site as my threshold (see Fig. 6). The likely presence of Situla Art workshops outside the Po Plain supports Colonna’s (1980, p. 181) hypothesis of the movement of artisans from Este to Slovenia in the sixth century BC. On the other hand, the number of Situla Art objects recorded does not suggest any economic-political decline at Este as hypothesised by Colonna (1980, p. 181) for this archaeological phase. A workshop, specialised in earring production, seems to be attested at Dolenjske Toplice (Fig. 6d, site 60) and, elsewhere in Slovenia, there might have been a workshop at Magdalenska gora between phases 3a and 4c (520/510–275 BC; Fig. 6e–h, site 53). Between phases 4a and 4b (475/450–350/325 BC) a workshop may be attested in the Innsbruck area, Austria, as at Oberperfuss, Aldrans, Volders and Wattens, where rather peculiar Situla Art ‘belt

plate[s]’ *sensu* Tomedi and Appler (2001, p. 113) are recorded (Online Resource 1, OBE.B1, ALD.B1–B3, and WAT.B1; Fig. 6g, sites 40–42). Although a concentration of ten Situla Art objects is also attested at Mechel, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (Fig. 6e–h, site 29), this was a cultic site where sheet-bronze objects were recycled to produce votive offerings; it is unlikely to have been a Situla Art production centre. This reconstructed pattern is, at least in part, in contrast with Lucke and Frey’s (1962, p. 51) reconstruction: they identified workshops at Este, Bologna, in the Magdalenberg—possibly both at Vače and Magdalenska gora, and in the Brenner area. Phases 2b–4b (550/530–350/325 BC) can be labelled as ‘Situla Art regionalisation’. It is also interesting to note that from phase 3a (520/510–500/480 BC), Situla Art objects in the eastern Alps are sometimes accompanied by Certosa fibulas (see Teržan, 1977). This pattern probably suggests a continuing link with the area of modern Italy. Moreover, it also suggests that Certosa fibulas were fashionable exotic goods, status symbols to be displayed during life and then deposited as grave goods.

In the fifth century BC, within the Situla Art distribution area, we have at least one bronze decorated object which can be interpreted as a ‘provincial’ attempt at imitating Situla Art motifs. This is the decorated conical bronze helmet found in the river Po near Cremona which has been compared by Egg (1988a, p. 271) to a similar helmet found at Oppeano. The latter depicts a procession of horses and a mythical creature, i.e., a centaur (Salzani, 2013, pp. 210–211), and has been included in Online Resource 1 (OPP.H1). On the other hand, the helmet from Cremona depicts four similar mounted soldiers throwing spears, in heraldic position (Egg, 1988b, pp. 498–500); mounted soldiers are found in Situla Art but they are generally depicted in procession (e.g., the Montebelluna situla, MON.S1, or the Zagorje belt plate, ZAG.B1). Even when mounted soldiers are depicted facing each other, they are never depicted in the same way (see the Vače belt plate, VAC.B1). Moreover, the execution of the figures on the Cremona helmet is a poor quality engraving and the artistic rendering is not typical of Situla Art.

In phase 4c (350/325–275 BC) we see the ‘decline of Situla Art’. Este (Fig. 6i; site 19) seems to be the only major Situla Art workshop that was active; on the basis of the quantity of recorded Situla Art objects, there was perhaps another minor production site at Magdalenska gora (Fig. 6i, site 53).

## Socio-Political Roles and Identities in Situla Art

Capuis (2001, p. 201) suggested that the new momentum produced by the early 1960s Situla Art itinerant exhibition led to the emergence of three main interpretations of Situla Art decoration: (1) real life representation (Gabrovec, 1961, p. 7; Kastelic, 1961, pp. 55, 58; Lucke & Frey, 1962, p. 48; Frey, 1966a, p. 52; Bermond Montanari, 1966, p. 396; Mansuelli, 1969, p. 106; Morigi Govi, 1971, p. 221; Fogolari, 1976, p. 63; 1988, p. 91; Kromer, 1980, p. 240), which had already been envisaged by earlier scholars (e.g., Zannoni, 1876; von Hochstetter, 1883; Ducati, 1923); (2) representation of the afterlife (Kastelic, 1961, pp. 55, 58, 61; Kossack, 1970, pp. 160–168; Frey, 1976, p. 584); and (3) myths and/or mythical/sacral transposition of real events, linked to fertility rituals, marriage and/or death (Kossack, 1970, pp.

160–168; Müller-Karpe, 1968, pp. 143–163). On the other hand, Kossack (1964, p. 105) linked feasting scenes in Situla Art to the Mesopotamian ‘New Year Festival’ ‘when Tammuz rises from the underworld and through his marriage to the Great Mother symbolically brings the renewal of life ...’. Thus, through the myth, life, death and immortality are linked together. It is, however, important to mention that Zaghetto (2017, p. 34) suggests that none of these interpretive strands has yet prevailed in the literature. Indeed, for some scholars the question of the interpretation of Situla Art remains open: ‘*Realität oder Mythos?*’ (Reality or Myth?) as Knez (1983, pp. 90, 92) put it. On the other hand, Perego (2013, p. 257) stresses that these three interpretive strands are unable to explain the complexity of the entire figurative pattern present on Situla Art objects (see also Koch, 2003). Is it most probably for this reason that, although the three main interpretive strands are still present in the literature (e.g., Kruta, 1992, pp. 248–288; Bartoloni & Morigi Govi, 1995; Capuis & Ruta Serafini, 1996, 2003; Càssola Guida, 1997; Kossack, 1998b; Eibner, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2018; Teržan, 2001, 2020; Zaghetto, 2002, 2017, 2022; Huth, 2003; Turk, 2005; Di Filippo Balestrazzi, 2011; Gleirscher, 2019; Nebelsick & Schaller, 2022), new ones have recently emerged. Carraro (2012) and Leonardi (2016), for example, suggested that the ungulates represented in Situla Art, characterised by different age-grades, could be seen as a metaphor for the elite family. On the other hand, Sebesta (2003) suggested that horses might be seen as a socio-ideological symbol linked to elite rites of passage (see discussion below).

I believe the close correlations between the objects depicted in Situla Art and those found in archaeological contexts might support the possibility that strand 1 (i.e., Situla Art motifs interpreted as a representation of real life) is a viable option to interpret at least some Situla Art motifs, those involving *Situlenfest* (i.e., feasting scenes *sensu* Kromer, 1980). These scenes, in fact, show the presence of individuals who stand out for their particular way of dressing and acting, offering insights concerning the social arrangements of the communities depicted, suggesting the presence of ‘princes’, ‘followers’ and ‘servants’ (*sensu* Lucke & Frey, 1962, pp. 9–29; Petru, 1975, pp. 879–882; Kromer, 1980, pp. 238–240; Eibner, 1981; Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, p. 330).

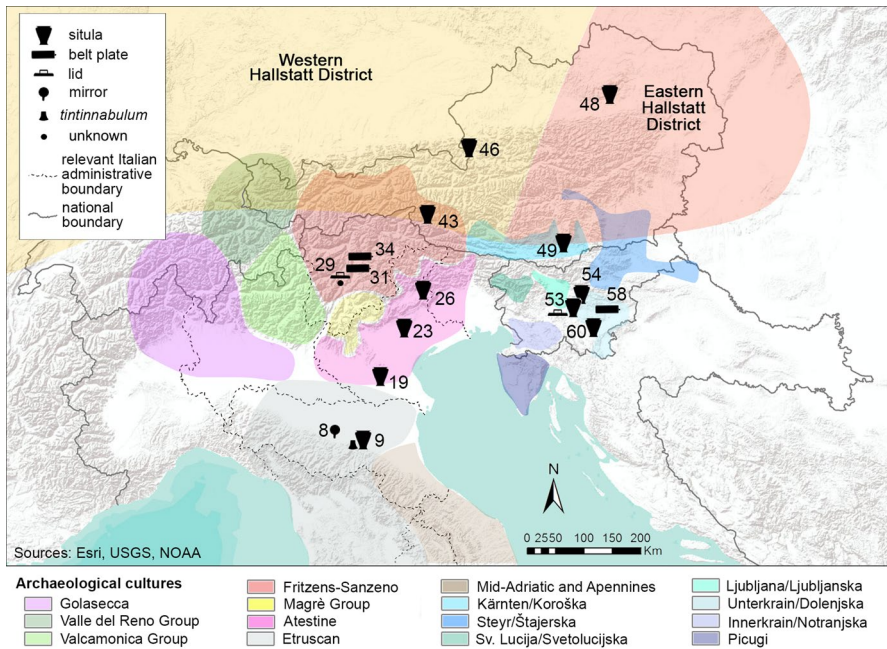
### Hats and Thrones in *Situlenfest*

It has been suggested that Situla Art was an ‘artistic language’ able to link communities differing both in terms of spoken language, depicted material culture, and most probably communicated identity (Gabrovec, 1961, p. 3; Fogolari, 1988, p. 83; Zaghetto, 2006, pp. 44; 2007: 173; Perego, 2013, p. 257; Voltolini, 2020, p. 30). Hence, it is important to look for possible ethnic markers, especially in *Situlenfest* depictions. The literature suggests that one of the most promising identity and ethnic markers is headgear (e.g., Zannoni, 1876, pp. 135–138, and 157–159, note 1; Chierici, 1880, pp. 100–101; Ducati, 1923, pp. 34–40; Gabrovec, 1961, p. 7; Lucke & Frey, 1962, pp. 12, 14, 20, 23–24; Kossack, 1964, p. 98; 1970, p. 164; Frey, 1969, pp. 84–85; Petru, 1975, p. 877; Capuis et al., 2016, p. 23; Zaghetto, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2017; Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, pp. 330–333).

According to Marchesini and Zaghetto (2019, p. 330), dignitaries, followers, and servants have their own distinctive hats. The first group is characterised either by broad-brimmed (or *petasos*) hats, soft caps or pointed hats (Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, p. 330). The second class is characterised by berets; the third has no hats but has shaven heads (Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, p. 330). Moreover, they suggest that while ‘the soft cap is found solely in the Alps,... the *petaso* ... was native to a more southern region’ (Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, p. 332). In my PhD thesis, I argued that ‘hats are the best ethnic indicators in the Situla Art decorative scheme’ (Saccoccio, 2020, p. 280) especially if they are coupled with a throne, i.e., a decorated seat, suggested by von Eles and Boiardi (2002, p. 238) as ‘... not only a symbol of rank; it expresses authority’ and, therefore, power (see also Eibner, 2007). In the following lines, I will focus my analysis on Situla Art objects depicting figures on a throne in order to suggest that broad-brimmed hats seem to identify high-status Veneti, and berets high-status Rhaeti. On the other hand, Situla Art objects in the Unterkrain/Dolenjska cultural district, as defined by Gabrovec (1999, p. 150, fig. 1), show both wavy-shaped and Phrygian-style hats worn by local high-status individuals.

Online Resource 2 lists 27 Situla Art objects depicting at least one figure on a throne. Nine of them come from Mechel where they were found recycled as votive offerings and/or hoarded at the local sanctuary to produce ex-votos (see Online Resource 2). On the basis of the size of the fragments and decoration displayed, I suggested that the minimum number of Situla Art objects recorded at Mechel might be in the order of ten (Saccoccio, 2021, p. 64). Therefore, the nine decorated plates from Mechel could have belonged to nine different objects, although in five cases the poor preservation of the objects does not allow us to discern the dress worn by the figure seated on a throne (i.e., Saccoccio, 2021, p. 54, fig. 4, M4–M5, M12, M22, and p. 59, fig. 6, no. 10). Unfortunately, due to poor preservation, we need to add to this list the situla from Dolenjske Toplice (Online Resource 2, DOT.S1) and one of the two situlas showing thrones found at Magdalenska gora (Online Resource 2, MAG.S2); on the latter, one of the two figures on a throne is not preserved while the other wears a crested helmet.

The Situla Art objects listed in Online Resource 2 make up only c. 9% of the Situla Art record listed in Online Resource 1 (27 out of 306). Twelve (44%) are situlas, seven (26%) are generic plates, three (11%) are lids; three (11%) are belt plates, one (4%) is a mirror, and one (4%) is a *tintinnabulum*. The latter is an *unicum*. According to Sassatelli (2013, p. 99), Situla Art is closely linked to high-status figures and is it interesting that so little evidence to date shows thrones. Therefore, it may be that the underlying elite-related meaning of the motifs depicted in Situla Art is much more complex and multi-faceted than commonly suggested and is still only partially understood by scholars (e.g., Carraro, 2012; Leonardi, 2016; Paltineri, 2018; Sebesta, 2003). The 27 Situla Art objects showing thrones cover most of the Situla Art distribution area but we lack evidence from the Italian mid-Adriatic district, Lombardy, eastern Switzerland, and Croatia (Fig. 7). The artefacts considered date to between Situla Art phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC) and phase 4b (425/400–350/325 BC), covering pretty much the whole period of Situla Art.



**Fig. 7** Distribution of Situla Art objects decorated with figures on a throne superimposed upon the main Iron Age cultures recognised in the literature (archaeological cultures after Gabrovec, 1999, p. 150, fig. 1; Grömer, 2018, p. 214; Marzatico, 2019, p. 76, fig. 4; Saccoccio, 2020, p. 142, fig. 52). List of sites shown and, in parenthesis, the number of finds per site: 8. Castelvetro (1), 9. Bologna (2), 19. Este (1), 23. Montebelluna (1), 26. Pieve d’Alpago (1), 29. Mechel (9), 31. Vadena (1), 34. Moritzing (1), 43. Welzelach (1), 46. Dürrnberg (1), 48. Kuffarn (1), 49. Waisenberg (1), 53. Magdalenska gora (3), 54. Vače (1), 58. Brezje (1), 60. Dolenjske Toplice (1) (colour version available online)

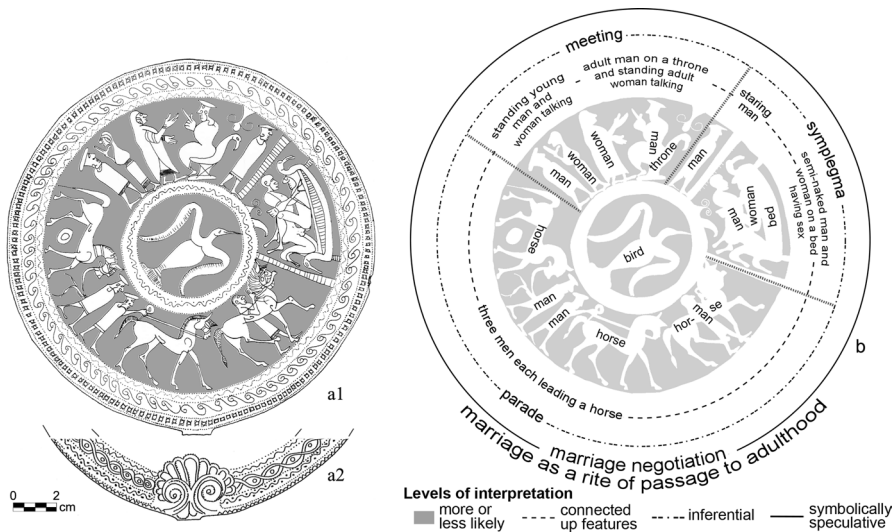
Before moving to the analysis of *Situlenfest* depictions, I will briefly discuss the distinction between iconicity, iconography and iconology: iconicity is a concept borrowed from linguistics and analyses the resemblance between form and meaning (Meir & Tkachman, 2014); on the other hand, iconography and iconology are borrowed from the history of art. According to Panofsky (1939, p. 3), iconography ‘... concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form’, while iconology is a ‘method of interpretation’ which analyses symbolic values (Panofsky, 1939, pp. 7–8).

Panofsky’s (1939) approach allows us to us to move up through a ladder of hierarchically-arranged interpretive levels when investigating works of art: at the bottom we have the realm of the more or less likely (e.g., an icon intended to be ‘read’ as a horse), then we have connected-up features (e.g., a horse as a means of movement within a narrative), inferential (i.e., a series of animals and humans heading towards the same direction implying a procession), and, at the top, symbolically speculative meanings (i.e., a horse as a marker of a particular social stratum). To provide an example which encompasses these hierarchically-arranged interpretive levels, I will discuss Neri (2001), Zaghetto (2002, pp.

40–41) and Sebesta’s (2003) interpretation of the Castelvetro mirror (Fig. 8), a Situla Art object found near Modena. All three scholars interpret the scenes as depicting a marriage negotiation.

The decoration on the Castelvetro mirror features human (male and female individuals), animal (horses), floral and furniture (a throne and a bed) icons which were inferentially distinguished by Zaghetto (2002, pp. 40–41) into three scenes: the ‘meeting’, the ‘parade’ and the ‘symplegma’. The ‘meeting’ is suggested through the presence of two pairs of individuals, the first consisting of a young male and a young female standing; the other of a standing adult female and an adult male seated on what can plausibly be interpreted as a throne. The sex and age of the depicted figures are probably recognisable through their physical appearance and depicted dress. The ‘parade’ shows three men each leading a horse moving anticlockwise. According to Zaghetto (2002, p. 41), the ‘symplegma’ scene comprises not only the man and woman having sex on a bed whose form recalls the so-called ‘solar boat’ motif, but also the standing man located to the left of them, which he suggests was present to certify that the sexual act has been performed. Zaghetto (2002, p. 41) also suggested that this is the same man shown seated on a throne in the ‘meeting’ scene. Zaghetto (2002, p. 41) speculated that the entire sequence depicts a marriage negotiation between two families, with the ‘meeting’ scene showing the audience between the two families and the ‘symplegma’ as the positive conclusion of the marital arrangements. Neri (2001, p. 29), on the other hand, suggests that the horses shown in the ‘parade’ scene could possibly be the dowry.

Sebesta (2003) also speculates that the ‘meeting’ scene on the Castelvetro mirror is linked to marriage negotiations but sees the horse parade in more symbolic terms. He suggests in fact that the three horses depict three different stages of the life of a

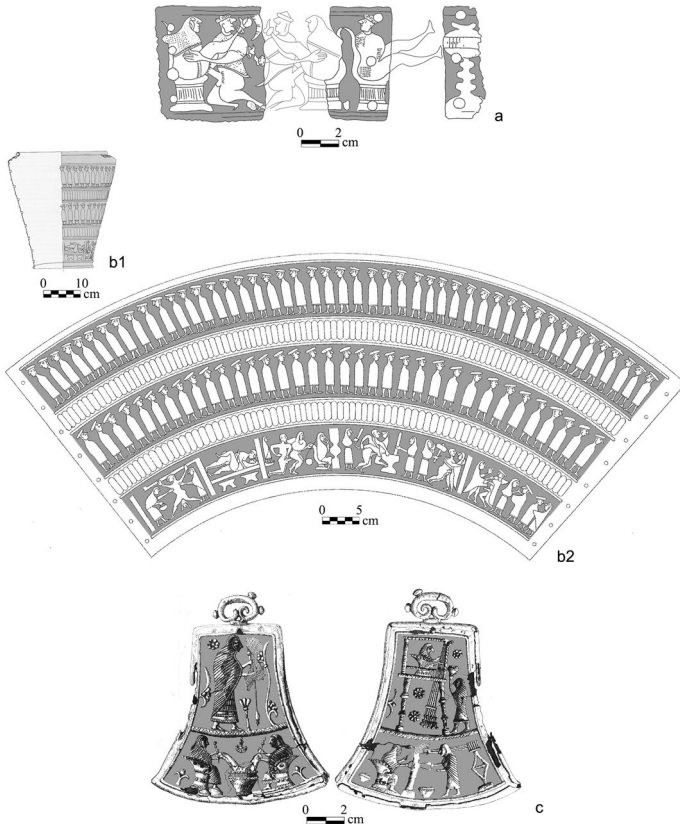


**Fig. 8** The Castelvetro mirror: **a1** verso and **a2** recto (after Pizzirani, 2009, pp. 180–181, pl. 2–3), and **b** the different levels of interpretation of the depiction according to Neri (2001), Zaghetto (2002, pp. 40–41) and Sebesta (2003)



horse: its breaking-in, the end of its training, and the apex of its career as a parade horse. These stages are then equated to the different stages of life of the young man depicted standing in the ‘meeting’ scene, who passes to adulthood through marriage (Sebesta, 2003, pp. 622–623).

Female figures are not so common in Situla art; nevertheless, according to Marchesini and Zaghetto (2019, pp. 330–331) there is a clear hierarchy: (1) adult/married women wear a veil or long cape and (2) young/unmarried women a shorter veil. Three of the 27 artefacts that show a figure on a throne depict a woman on a throne: the belt plate from Brezje (Fig. 9a; Online Resource 2, BRE.B1), the situla from Pieve d’Alpago (Fig. 9b; Online Resource 2, PdA.S1), and the *tintinnabulum* from Bologna (Fig. 9c; Online Resource 2, BOL.T1). According to Barth (1999, p. 58, fig. 1; see Fig. 9a), the Brezje belt plate shows at least two women on thrones having sex with men wearing a wavy hat; the belt plate is dated to Situla Art phase 2a (610/650–550/530 BC). There are five sex scenes on the lowest frieze of the Pieve d’Alpago situla, dated to Situla Art phase 3a (520/510–500/480 BC; see Fig. 9b),



**Fig. 9** Situla Art objects showing women seated on a throne: **a** the Brezje belt plate (after Barth, 1999, p. 58, fig. 1); **b** the Pieve d’Alpago situla (after Buson, 2015b, p. 189, fig. 4 and p. 192, fig. 5); and **c** the *tintinnabulum* from Bologna (after Morigi Govi, 1971, pl. LII, LIV)

and, in one of them, a woman on a throne is depicted. She is not directly involved in the sexual intercourse but is facing in the other direction. On the basis of an ethnographic parallel from Kenya, where wedding celebrations had to be approved by female elders who also had to certify the consummation of the marriage (Strobel, 1975, p. 38), I would argue that she was a female elder whose presence was necessary to certify that the sexual intercourse was taking place.

The *tintinnabulum* (Fig. 9c) found in the so-called *Tomba degli Ori* at Bologna, dated to Situla Art phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC), pertains to a rich grave likely of a high-status woman according to anthropological analysis and the lavish grave goods recovered (Morigi Govi, 1971 and references therein). The decoration on the *tintinnabulum* supports this (Cupitò & Vidale, 2020 and references therein). It is the only Situla Art object found to date that depicts only women, and they are in what seems to be an elite environment symbolised by decorated furniture, costume and veils. The importance of textile production is highlighted by the Odyssey (19, 149–151; 24, 139–141; Murray, 1919, pp. 244–245 and 422–423; i.e., Penelope) and the Iliad (6, 490–493; Murray, 1924, pp. 310–311; i.e., Andromache), both of which were written down in the late eighth century BC (Willcock, 2012), before Situla Art emerged. The suggestion that the *tintinnabulum* might depict a figure like Penelope (Sannibale, 2013, p. 104), or even a Goddess of Fate (Eibner, 1981, p. 283), could imply that myths were used to highlight the status and importance of the buried woman. This pattern might find a good parallel in the Benvenuti situla (see Fig. 1b), which is slightly more recent (i.e., 630–620 BC; Zaghetto, 2017, p. 76), but where elite men seem to be depicted within a mythical framework (see Kruta, 1992, pp. 253–261; Càssola Guida, 1997, p. 203; Huth, 2003, p. 167; Cupitò, 2016).

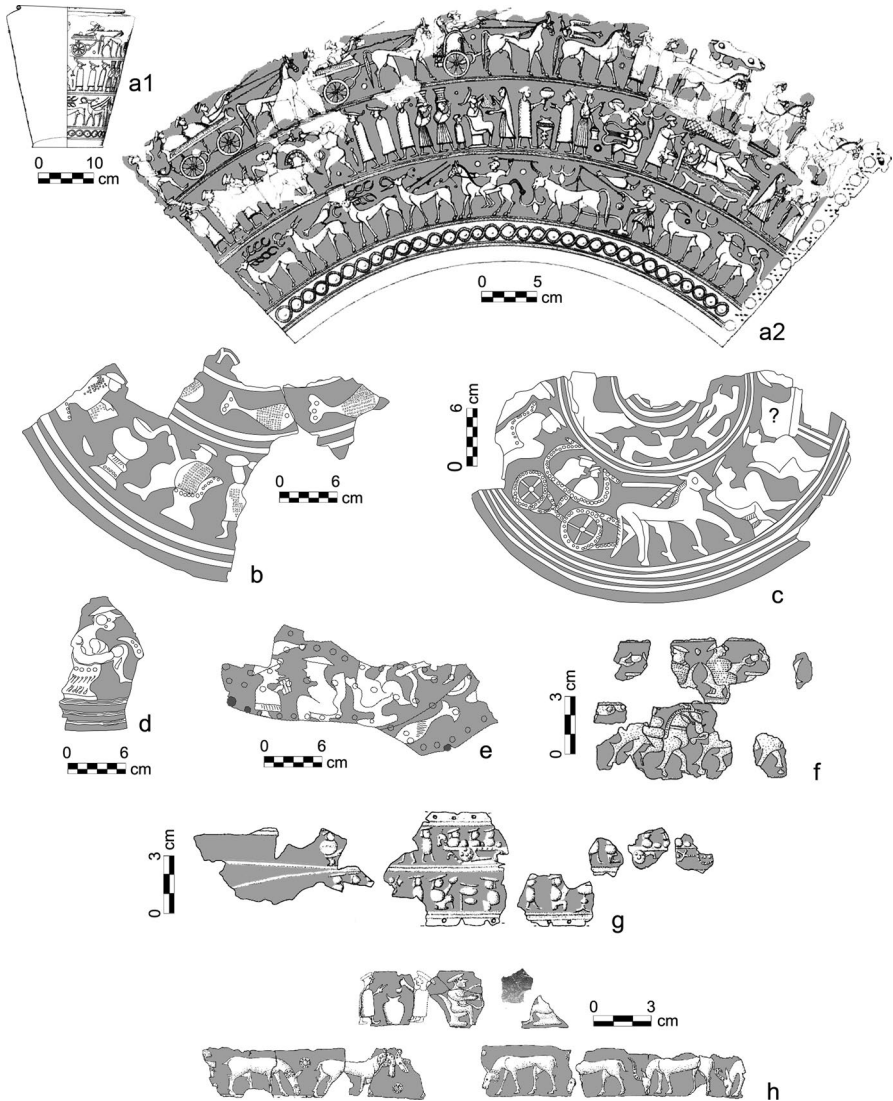
The oldest artefact showing men on a throne is the Benvenuti situla (see Fig. 1b; Online Resource 2, EST.S3). It is interesting that, although the decoration on the situla is male-driven with feasting and boxing, the other grave goods show that the burial is of an adult woman and an infant (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pp. 330–331). From an iconic perspective, the upper frieze of the Benvenuti situla shows four broad-brimmed hats depicted associated with cloaks; in three cases broad-brimmed hats are associated with thrones. From left to right the first man wearing a broad-brimmed hat, and what appears to be a bronze(?) stud-decorated cloak, is raising a cup, interpreted by Zaghetto (2017, p. 205; see also Cupitò, 2016; Verger, 2017, p. 21) as in the act of blessing/toasting the horse in front of him. His sleeve has a check motif which Ducati (1923, p. 36) suggests is Oriental in origin. It seems to be attested at Verucchio from the eighth to seventh century BC (Zaghetto, 2017, p. 85, fig. 30 and references therein). The horse located near the man on a throne displayed on the top frieze of the Benvenuti situla seems to be controlled by a groom, vet or executioner, who has no hat but possibly a hood (Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 130–140, 174–175; see also Càssola Guida, 1997, p. 204). The second man on a throne, also wearing a broad-brimmed hat, is located in the middle of the top frieze holding an object, which Càssola Guida (1997, pp. 204–205) suggests is probably a cup or a *tintinnabulum* to signal the start/end of the boxing match. Left of him is a standing man with an undecorated cloak and a broad-brimmed hat holding a cup. The last of the four broad-brimmed hats shown on the situla is related to a throne,

the latter possibly covered by a cloak decorated with bronze(?) studs. A decorated cloak may also cover the throne to the left of it.

The possibility that cloaks were decorated with bronze studs is further suggested by the presence of 104 studs in the same burial, Este-Benvenuti grave 126 (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, p. 323, no. 11). They were found among the burnt bones of the infant, collected inside an urn placed within the decorated situla itself (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pp. 322–323). At Pieve d'Alpago-Pian de la Gnella, another Venetic cemetery, two graves had a good number of bronze studs: 63 in grave 6 (Bassetti & Voltolini, 2015, pp. 127–128) and 72 in grave 7 (Bassetti et al., 2015, p. 142). The grave goods suggest that the burials were female, though they might have contained more than one individual (Bassetti & Voltolini, 2015, p. 129; Bassetti et al., 2015, p. 145). It is challenging that all the archaeological evidence relating to bronze studs seems documented from female graves.

A third-century votive plaque found at Padua-via Tiepolo/via San Massimo, published by Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini (2009, p. 391, fig. 5), suggests that bronze studs were used by the Veneti to decorate both male and female dress. Zaghetto (2017, p. 84) maintains that decorated cloaks, as a status symbol, were probably not only to be found in the Veneto region on the grounds of the stud-decorated cloak found at Stična, mound 48 grave 27 (Hellmuth, 2008). A similar pattern can be also suggested for hats; they also could be decorated by applying bronze studs as shown in the plaque found at Padua-via Tiepolo/via San Massimo. In the Situla Art *repertoire*, stud-decorated hats are found in the middle frieze of the Benvenuti situla, on the head of a figure possibly to be interpreted as the 'Lord of Nature': he has a throne in the form of a plant, has a dog on a leash, and is surrounded by fantastic creatures which Kruta (1992, p. 253) suggests might have been selected to evoke mythical episodes. A hat decorated with buttons is also found in the second frieze, from the top, of the Magdalenska gora situla (Online Resource 1, MAG.S2) characterising the male figure with a stick who seems to be judging the boxing match. Bronze studs seem also to be present on the helmets of the warriors displayed on the breastplate found at Forlì (see Fig. 21).

On the basis of the motif depicted on the Carceri belt plate (see Fig. 2a), Frey (1969, pp. 84–85) suggested that broad-brimmed hats might be reserved for high-status Venetic men. Male figures on a throne wearing a broad-brimmed hat are also shown on the Benvenuti and Montebelluna situlas (Online Resource 1, MON.S1; Fig. 10a), the latter dated to Situla Art phase 2b (550/530–520/510 BC). The Montebelluna situla has a Venetic inscription on its rim but Marinetti (2017, p. 80) suggests that it is difficult to be sure if it is contemporary with the manufacture of the situla. Thanks to its similarities with the Castelvetro mirror, which Neri (2001; cf. Zaghetto, 2002, pp. 40–41; Sebesta, 2003; Fig. 10b) suggests depicts a marriage negotiation, the Montebelluna situla might be interpreted in a similar way (see also Ruta Serafini & Zaghetto, 2019). On the latter, both the men on a throne wear a broad-brimmed hat and thus we might infer that the scene could represent the union of two elite families. The bride to be is likely shown as the female figure on a two-wheel chariot located in the top frieze. She is possibly also shown escorted by her relatives, the male figures on the two four-wheel carts wearing flat berets, who are possibly also depicted in the middle frieze to



**Fig. 10** North Italian and Alpine Situla Art objects showing men seated on a throne: **a** the Montebelluna situla (after Bianchin Citton, 2014, p. 1004, fig. 4); **b–e** lids and plates from Mechel (after Saccoccio, 2021, p. 58, fig. 5, M30 and p. 59, fig. 6, nos. 1, 7, 9); **f** the belt plate from Moritzing (after Steiner, 2002, p. 322, pl. 7, no. 1); **g** the belt plate from Vadena (after Dal Ri, 1992, p. 502, fig. 13, no. 1a); and **h** the situla from Waisenberg-mound 2 (after Gleirscher, 2009a, p. 51, fig. 14)

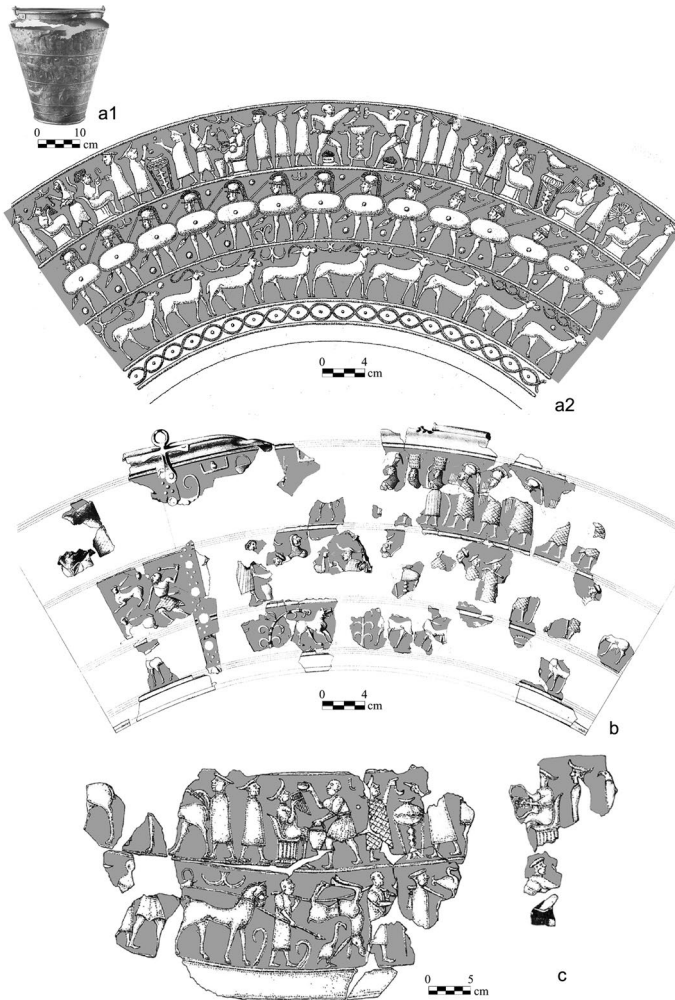
the left of the boxing match. In the middle frieze, the importance of the male figure with a flat beret closer to the boxing match might be suggested by his stick, which may be a *bâton de commandement*. If men with flat berets are not Venetic, they might have belonged to the Magrè Group, a hybrid Atestine-Rhaetic cultural group (Lora & Ruta Serafini, 1992), or be Rhaetic, as Montebelluna is close to

the Fritzens-Sanzeno cultural area (see Fig. 7). If this is the case, the absence of Rhaetic/Magrè individuals seated on a throne might suggest the higher importance given to the Veneti in this phase.

The hypothesis that flat berets might identify high-status Rhaetic men seems to be supported by Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol Situla Art objects showing male figures on a throne (Figs. 10b–g). The plaques from Mechel are recycled objects, but likely date to Situla Art phases 3a–4b (520/510–350/325 BC; Figs. 10b–e; Online Resource 1, MEC.L1–L2 and MEC.Z1–Z8), while the belt plates from Moritzing and Vadena (Fig. 10f–g; Online Resource 1, MOR.B1 and VAD.B1) date to Situla Art phases 4a–b (475/450–350/325 BC). In those depictions, berets are flat or conical in form (e.g., Figs. 10e, g). In the light of the decoration shown in Fig. 10f, it is possible to postulate that the man seated on a throne located in a secondary position, behind another man seated on a throne depicted closer to the cauldron-feasting table, may be a guest, possibly Rhaetic, at the court of another Rhaetic dignitary. Both, in fact, wear a beret. Also, the very poorly preserved situla from Waisenberg, Austria, shows at least one man on a throne wearing a flat beret (Fig. 10h; Tab.1, WAI.S2). The presence of a man seated on a throne wearing a beret on the Castelvetro mirror, dated to Situla Art phase 3a (520/510–500/480 BC; Online Resource 1, CAS.M1; see Fig. 8), might also suggest that the marriage negotiation discussed above involved Rhaeti. The location of the object and the presence of rounded earrings (see discussion below) suggest that the women depicted might have been local (i.e., from around Bologna and Modena), and possibly Etruscans (see the discussion on ethnicity in Zamboni, 2022, pp. 89–90). Sebesta (2003, p. 616) stresses that *matronae* (married women) had a pivotal role in Etruscan families; in the Castelvetro mirror, the standing female figure talking with the man on a throne could be a *matrona*. Sassatelli (1989, p. 57) suggests that the perimetral floral decoration on the recto of the mirror was probably made at Bologna (see Fig. 8a2); the narrative motif on the verso (see Fig. 8a1), however, was probably made by a ‘northern artisan’.

The depiction of ‘guests’ is not uncommon in Situla Art objects showing figures seated on a throne. One example is provided by the Providence situla, dated to Situla Art phase 2a (610/600–550/530 BC; Tab.1, BOL.S2; Fig. 11a), which Lucke and Frey (1962, p. 1) suggest is likely to come from the Bologna-Certosa cemetery (see also Sassatelli, 2018, pp. 358–359 and references therein). The inscription on the rim of the situla is still controversial both as regards the script (Etruscan or Rhaetic), and its date (cf. the Montebelluna situla above) (see Sassatelli, 2018, pp. 359–360 and references therein; Marchesini & Zaghetto, 2019, pp. 333–339 and references therein). In the top frieze, the man seated on a throne in the second row has a broad-brimmed hat, and is therefore possibly Venetic, while the man in the front row has a hat which is different from those encountered so far: the hat is oval, puffy with a rounded crown. A similar motif is found on the poorly preserved Welzelach situla, Austria, also dated to Situla Art phase 2a (610/600–550/530 BC; Tab.1, WEL.S1; Fig. 11b). There, the man seated on a throne in the front row has an oval, puffy hat with a pointed crown. On the Providence situla, male ‘followers’ *sensu* Marchesini and Zaghetto (2019, p. 330) wear a beret.

The Dürrenberg-Kranzbichl situla, Austria, found in a middle La Tène grave where it was possibly placed as a family heirloom, is also assigned to Situla Art

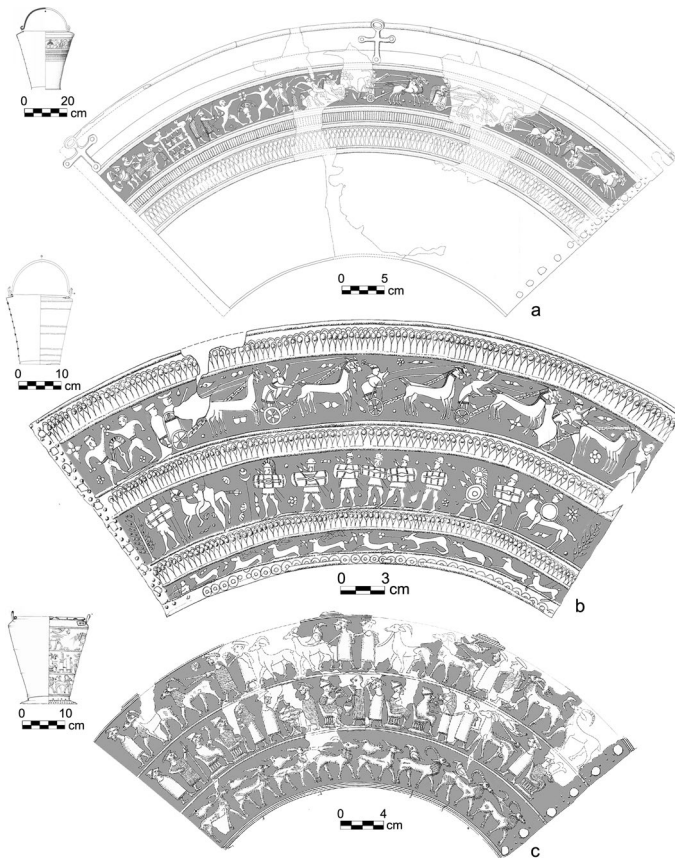


**Fig. 11** The **a** Providence (after Lucke & Frey, 1962, pl. 2 and appendix 1, no. 1); **b** Welzelach (after Lucke & Frey, 1962, pl. 76, no. 44); and **c** Dürrenberg-Kranzbichl (after Zeller, 2004, p. 400, fig. 15) situlas

phase 2a (610/600–550/530 BC; Tab.1, DÜR.S1; Fig. 11c) by Zaghetto (2017, p. 61, fig. 16). Only two friezes are preserved. In the top frieze, the man seated on a throne wears a broad-brimmed hat; the most important figure preserved in the lower frieze is possibly the man located on the far right side of the sheet: he wears a flat beret and may be shown seated on a cart (cf. the top left frieze of the Montebelluna situla; see Fig. 10a2). His hat has close parallels with that displayed on the lid from Mechel (see Fig. 10b). The followers on the Dürrenberg-Kranzbichl situla wear a flat beret; servants have no headgear. In the light of the presence of broad-brimmed and beret hats, the Dürrenberg-Kranzbichl situla might depict the encounter between

high-status Venetic and Rhaetic individuals. The fact that only Veneti were depicted sitting on a throne could be the outcome of poor preservation or it might suggest the greater importance of these individuals compared to their Rhaetic counterparts. Nevertheless, the gap of c. 250 years between the date of the grave where it was found and the manufacture of the situla poses a huge problem for the reconstruction of the biography of this piece and raises the problem as to whether the story depicted was still understood.

The Kuffarn situla (Fig. 12a), Austria, dated to Situla Art phase 3b (500/480–475/450 BC; Tab.1, KUF.S1) is problematic as the only man depicted on a throne has a broad-brimmed hat like the Veneti and yet it was not found in the Este culture area. Two other hats are depicted on the only decorated frieze: flat berets worn by ‘followers’, such as those judging the boxing match, and Phrygian hats worn by horsemen and charioteers. It is odd that ‘followers’ are depicted with some sort of *bâton de commandement* and judging the box match. This suggests that



**Fig. 12** The **a** Kuffarn (Nebehay, 1993, pl. 7, no. 1 and appendix 1), **b** Arnoaldi (Macellari, 2002, pp. 24–25, pl. 16), and **c** Magdalenska gora (Tecco Hvala et al., 2004, pl. 85, no. 17 and appendix 4) situlas

the situla may be a local product which attempted to depict Atestine elite fashion in feasting and dressing, but possibly without fully understanding it, as if it was known only by hearsay. Moreover, the *bâton de commandement* assumes in this case the form of a double-stick like that used to lead animals depicted on the Magdalenska gora situla (Fig. 12c).

Kuffarn is geographically distant from the Atestine world (see Fig. 7, site 48; see also Eibner, 2012). Moreover, the broad-brimmed hat worn by the man on the throne seems badly drawn and appears to be an attempt to imitate those depicted on the Benvenuti situla. Also, he appears not to be properly seated like the figure on the top left corner of the Benvenuti situla (see Fig. 1b) but reclining, recalling the man on the *klinē* (i.e., a couch) on the belt from Carceri (see Fig. 2a), which is a unique motif in the Po Plain. The chariot race seems to follow a similar decorative scheme to that depicted on the upper frieze of the Arnoaldi situla (Fig. 12b; see Eibner, 2012, pp. 55–56), dated to Situla Art phase 3b (500/480–475/450 BC; Online Resource 1, BOL.S3), and on the sixth century BC *dolium* found at the cemetery of Oppeano-Ca' del Ferro grave 4/1971 (Ferrari & Salzani, 2018, p. 126, pl. 24). On the Arnoaldi situla, the charioteers are also depicted wearing a Phrygian hat and the beginning of the race seems to be marked by a man holding a ribbon located on the far right of the scene. According to Eibner (2012, p. 56), the winning charioteer on the Kuffarn situla is marked by the depiction of a bird on his back (see Fig. 12a).

The man on a throne with broad-brimmed hat on the Kuffarn situla seems to be depicted in the act of toasting the chariot/horse race. Zaghetto (2017, pp. 130–140, 174–175, 205) suggests that this scene finds a close parallel in top left frieze of the Benvenuti situla where the man on a throne toasts/blesses the horse he keeps on reins which is meticulously checked by a groom, vet or executioner. Càssola Guida (1997, p. 207) suggests that the horse on the Benvenuti situla is possibly going to be sacrificed in honour of the man on a throne as she interprets the situla in a funerary key. Indeed, we know from Strabo (5, 1, 9) that '[i]t is a historical fact ... that among the Heneti [i.e., the Veneti] certain honours have been decreed to Diomedes; and, indeed, a white horse is still sacrificed to him ...' (Jones, 1923, pp. 320–321).

Relying, among other sources, on the second century AD Roman historian Festus, Zaghetto (2017, pp. 174–177) speculates that the event depicted on the Benvenuti situla might have happened in October, because for the Romans the *October Equus* (October 15th) was a festivity celebrating the end of the fighting season and the triumph of the troops returning from the battlefield. To this feast, Zaghetto (2017: 145–151) also links the scene on the lower frieze of the Benvenuti situla (see Fig. 1b), which he interprets as depicting the return of the Atestine armies after a victory: hairy prisoners are led bound by Atestine foot soldiers in a parade following the chariot of the victorious general(?).

The principal ritual linked to the Roman *October Equus* was the sacrifice of a horse: '*October Equus appellatur, qui in campo Martio mense Octobri immolatur quotannis Marti, bigarum victricum dexterior*' (Lindsay, 1913, p. 190), which may be translated, 'It is called October Horse, as annually in October the horse harnessed on the right-hand of the victorious chariot is offered to Mars in the Campus Martius'.

The words of Strabo (5, 1, 9; Jones, 1923, pp. 320–321) and Festus (in Lindsay, 1913, p. 190) might be mirrored by the chariot race scene on the Kuffarn



situla (Fig. 12a), which I consider to be a local imitation of Atestine Situla Art production, and where each of the chariots depicted has, harnessed on the right-hand side, what may be a white horse, distinguished from those to the left by the absence of decoration. Zaghetto (2017, pp. 136, 205) has already stressed the close relationship between the Kuffarn and Benvenuti situlas and it does not seem too much of a stretch to suggest that, in the Kuffarn situla depiction, if a horse is going to be sacrificed it could be the white horse harnessed on the right side of the victorious chariot in the race. Why else would horses have been distinguished in a similar way for all the depicted chariots? There seems to be too good a correspondence between Festus' words and the Kuffarn situla decoration for it to be purely random. Horses, in fact, seem to be important in Situla Art (Teržan, 2011); horse sacrifices are attested in the Veneto, Bologna, Tyrrhenian Etruria, Umbria, Marche and Slovenia (Millo, 2013; Kmet'ová, 2017; Zaghetto, 2017, pp. 217–223). A cemetery consisting of 34 horse burials has been found at Este-via Prà; one horse had a cup, dated to the sixth to fourth century BC, deposited between its skull and upper legs (Millo, 2013, p. 365). In mid-Adriatic Italy a common motif depicted on breastplates is the '*despotes ton hippon*' (i.e., the Lord of the Horses), then replaced by the 'two-headed horse', the 'fantastic horse' and the 'Abruzzi drake horse-bird' (Tomedi, 2000, pl. 155; Weidig, 2016).

In the Unterkrain/Dolenjska area Situla Art objects depicting men on a throne suggest that two different kinds of hats were used by the local elite. Due to the differing dates of the Situla Art objects analysed, it is possible to explain this pattern through fashion, movement of groups, a changing social make-up with an older elite replaced by new emerging classes, or that the cultural district defined by Gabrovec (1999, p. 150, fig. 1) has to be somehow reconsidered.

The 'two twin sisters situlas of Vače and Magdalenska gora' (Kastelic, 1961, p. 33; see also Teržan, 2020; see Figs. 1c, 12c; Fig. 7, nos. 53, 54) are both dated to Situla Art phase 2a (610/600–550/530 BC; Online Resource 1, VAC.S1 and MAG.S1) and show men on a throne wearing a Phrygian-style hat. On both situlas, followers, leading animals or on horseback, are characterised by flat berets; on the Vače situla, a man depicted in the middle frieze serving a beverage from a ladle to one of the men on a throne has a bald head and should be seen as a servant. The many stylistic and iconographic affinities between the two situlas, and their similar date, might suggest that they were made to celebrate the same event.

Another Situla Art object depicting a man on a throne was found at Magdalenska gora. It is a lid (Online Resource 1, MAG.L1) and, although poorly preserved, it can be seen that the man depicted on a throne wears a wavy-shaped hat; his socio-political importance is denoted by the presence of a *bâton de commandement* (Fig. 13). It is probable that a second person seated on a throne was depicted in front of him but is now lost. The lid is dated to Situla Art phases 3a–b (520/510–475/450 BC; Online Resource 1, MAG.L1). A similar hat is found on the Brezje belt plate, dated to Situla Art phase 2a (610/600–550/530 BC; Tab.1, BRE.B1; see Fig. 9a).

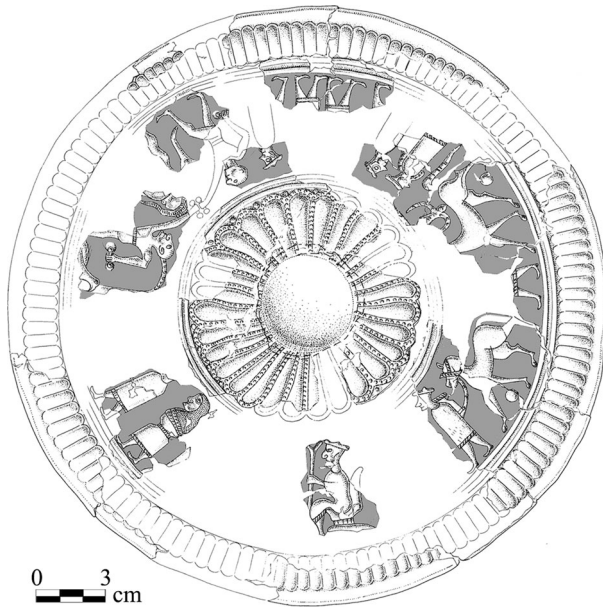


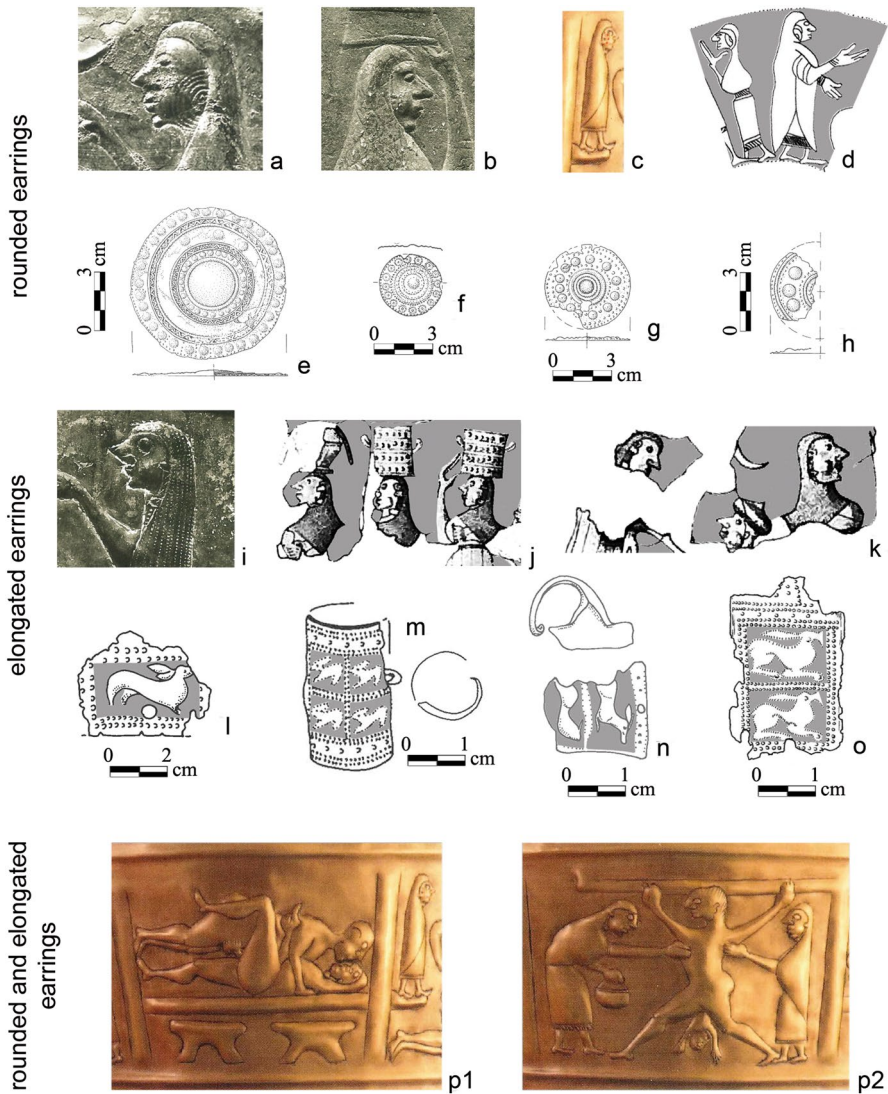
Fig. 13 The Magdalenska gora lid (after Tecco Hvala et al., 2004, appendix 5)

### Female Earrings in Situla Art: an Identity Marker?

The throne-women combination does not provide as much evidence about identity as it does for the men. However, it seems that different female earrings characterise different geographical areas in the Situla Art distribution. Specifically, two different kinds of earrings are depicted in Situla Art, rounded and elongated; they seem also to be found as grave goods in Iron Age cemeteries within the Situla Art distribution area.

Rounded earrings seem mainly to be found in the area south of the Alps, mostly within present-day Italy, and their widespread distribution does not allow them to be used as ethnic markers. Rounded earrings are associated with women on the Providence (Fig. 14a; Online Resource 1, BOL.S2), Certosa (Fig. 14b; Online Resource 1, BOL.S1) and Pieve d'Alpago (Fig. 14c; Online Resource 1, PdA.S1) situlas, and the Castelvetro mirror (Fig. 14d; Online Resource 1, CAS.M1). Bronze discs that may match the earrings displayed in Situla Art were found in Este-Benvenuti grave 123 (e.g., Chieco Bianchi & Capuis, 2006, pl. 176, nos. 3–4 and pl. 180, nos. 30–31; Fig. 14e–h).

However, there is at least one exception, as rounded earrings are documented on the Brezje belt plate, Slovenia (Online Resource 1, BRE.B1), worn by the preserved woman in the sex scene (who may therefore be a Venetic woman; see Fig. 9a). On the other hand, elongated earrings are mainly found on eastern Alpine Situla Art objects such as the Vače (Fig. 14i; Online Resource 1, VAC.S1) and Welzelach (Fig. 14j–k; Online Resource 1, WEI.S1) situlas. Vogt (1934, p. 52) suggested that they were characteristic of the Hallstatt area, specifically of Carniola according to Frey (1969, p. 58).



**Fig. 14** Rounded earrings from Italian Situla Art and archaeological contexts: **a** the Providence situla (after Umetnost situla, 1964, p. 75); **b** the Certosa situla (after Umetnost situla, 1964, p. 20); **c** the Pieve d’Alpago situla (after Buson, 2015b, p. 198, pl. XI, no. 6); **d** the Castelvetro mirror (after Pizzirani, 2009, p. 181, pl. 3); and **e–h** bronze decorated discs from Este-Benvenuti grave 126 (Capuis & Chieco Bianchi, 2006, pl. 176, nos. 3–4 and pl. 180, nos. 30–31). Elongated earrings in eastern Alpine Situla Art and archaeological contexts: **i** the Vače situla (after Umetnost situla, 1964, p. 6); **j–k** the Welzelack situla (Lucke & Frey, 1962, pl. 76, no. 44); **l** Vače (Turk, 2005, p. 73, fig. 111); **m** Magdalenska gora (Turk, 2005, p. 23, fig. 21, bottom right); **n** Dolenjske Toplice (Turk, 2005, p. 74, fig. 116, top left); and **o** Stična (Frey, 1969, pl. 81, no. 43). Rounded and elongated earrings: **p** Pieve d’Alpago situla (after Buson, 2015b, p. 198, pl. XI, ns 6–7) (colour version available online)

This pattern is supported archaeologically: elongated earrings were found as grave goods at Vače (Fig. 14i; Online Resource 1, VAC.E2), Magdalenska gora (Fig. 14m; Online Resource 1, MAG.E5), Dolenjske Toplice (Fig. 14n; Tab.1, DOT.E6), and Stična (Fig. 14o; Tab.1, STI.E1).

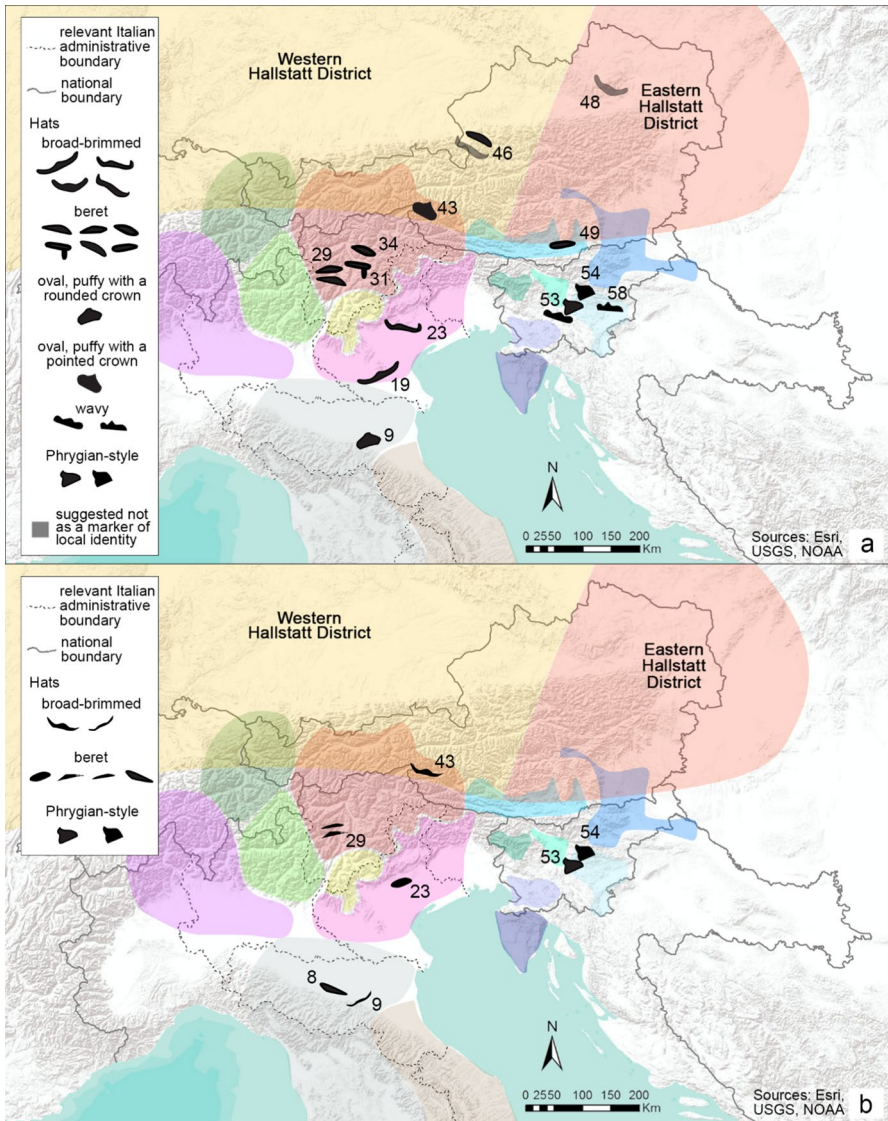
Elongated earrings also characterise the women depicted on the lower frieze of the Pieve d'Alpago situla (see Fig. 14p). This is not clearly shown in the drawing of the situla, but they are shown in the photographs of the reproduction made by Buson (2015a, p. 198, pl. XI, no. 6). Interestingly, on the same situla the female statue located on a shelf in the middle of the lowest frieze wears rounded earrings (see Fig. 14c). Gangemi (2015, p. 115) proposes that this statue might have represented a goddess; it was possibly the depiction of a family ancestor, and we know that the Romans kept such household gods (*Lares*) in their homes. On these grounds, we may postulate that the woman depicted having sexual intercourse (Fig. 14p1) was probably foreign since she is wearing elongated earrings, and that she moved with her retinue to Pieve d'Alpago to marry a local high-status Venetic(?) man. Elongated earrings, in fact, are worn by the handmaids depicted in Fig. 14p2.

The outcome of this investigation on hats and earrings is shown in Fig. 15. According to Fig. 15a, it is possible to suggest that high-status figures, who we might term 'princes', wear: (a) broad-brimmed hats in the Veneto region; (b) flat berets in the Rhaetic area; and (c) Phrygian-style and wavy-hats in the Unterkrain/Dolenjska cultural area. This pattern is sometimes not straightforward (as in the case of the Kuffarn and Dürrenberg situlas), but the highlighted exceptions could be related to imitation and object biographies (see discussion above). It is also difficult to assess the pattern for the Etruscan area due to the limited evidence available and the problems reconstructing the provenance of the Providence situla, which Mansuelli (1969, pp. 110–111) suggests was Alpine on the basis of its decoration. The so-called 'cowboy' statue acroterion found at the Etruscan site of Poggio Civitate near Murlo in north Etruria, dated to the Archaic period, wears a broad-brimmed hat, but with a pointy tip (O'Donoghue, 2013 and references therein). O'Donoghue (2013, p. 275, note 2) suggests that the cowboy hat is also depicted on an urn and in a tomb-painting in Chiusi, i.e., north Etruria. Thus, there is a chance that the north Etruscans and the Veneti used a similar headgear (cf. the stele from Camin; Fogolari, 1988, p. 99, fig. 127).

If we look at the hats worn by high-status guests, i.e., those seated on the back row or suggested as such in the case of the Montebelluna situla and the Castelvetro mirror (see discussion above), we can see interaction patterns involving most of the areas that used Situla Art. This pattern is strengthened if we look at female earrings; they suggest interaction, possibly through marriage to secure alliances between powerful families (*sensu* Pomeroy, 1995, p. 18), at least between the Veneti, Rhaeti, Etruscans(?) and the Unterkrain/Dolenjska cultural area.

## Representativity

It is not easy to provide an estimate of the original number of Situla Art objects produced but is worth discussion. It is not possible to investigate this issue following Taylor's (2001) approach; he compared the weight of silver recorded in the fifth



**Fig. 15** Male hats and female earrings in Situla Art: **a** distribution map of male hats worn by figures seated on a throne, front row; **b** distribution map of male hats worn by high-status guests, i.e. seated in the second row or bearing a *bâton de commandement*; **c** distribution of female earrings by form (archaeological culture after Gabrovec, 1999, p. 150, fig. 1; Grömer, 2018, p. 214; Marzatico, 2019, p. 76, fig. 4; Saccoccio, 2020, p. 142, fig. 52). List of sites shown: 8. Castelvetro, 9. Bologna, 19. Este, 23. Montebelluna, 26. Pieve d’Alpago, 29. Mechel, 31. Vadena, 34. Moritzing, 43. Welzelach, 46. Dürrenberg, 48. Kuffarn, 49. Waisenberg, 53. Magdalenska gora, 54. Vače, 56. Stična, 58. Brezje, 60. Dolenjske Toplice (colour version available online)

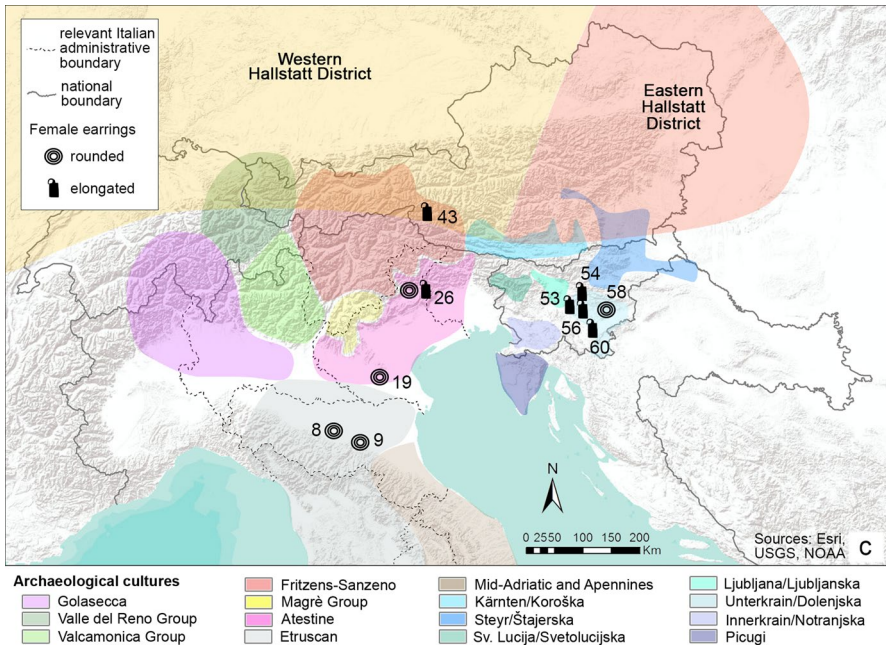


Fig. 15 (continued)

to fourth centuries BC written sources with the weight of silver held in museums across the entire Carpatho-Balkan region, which led him to conclude ‘that archaeologically speaking, there is *at best* of the order of a 0.01 per cent representativity for silverwork in the archaeological record’. Moreover, it is not possible to approach silver and bronze analytically in the same way as silver is likely to have been more valuable than bronze throughout prehistory, because of its rarity in nature and its shiny qualities (Pearce, 2018, p. 93–94).

Lacking ancient written sources discussing metal production in the Situla Art area, and being unable to access the weight of the objects, I will discuss this issue employing a more creative approach. I will base my analysis on the data available from Este, the likely key centre of Situla Art. According to Online Resource 1, at least 79 Situla Art objects were produced at Este over the entire period of Situla Art production, i.e., 660/650–275 BC. This means at least c. 0.2 objects were produced per year at this site; this estimate is, however, a conservative one as it does not consider ‘gift-exchange, use-lives and recycling’, factors which are recalled as crucial in Taylor’s (2001, p. 33) estimate. To overcome this problem, and take more into account these factors, I have decided to consider all the sites where Situla Art objects were found, i.e., 62, in the same way as Este and suggest that each site was capable of producing 0.2 objects per year. I do understand that this approach is not unproblematic, putting on the same level sites like Este and Castelvetro, for example, is not ideal but, to a certain extent (which is difficult to quantify), it should allow me to balance out the loss of objects due to gift-exchange, use-lives and recycling. The outcome of my analysis suggests that c. 12 Situla Art objects would have been

produced in the Situla Art area each year and this leads to a grand total of 4960 (i.e.  $400 \times 12.4$ ) Situla Art objects produced over the whole period of Situla Art production, i.e., 400 years. The 306 Situla Art objects listed in Online Resource 1 would then account for just 6% of the original number of Situla Art objects produced in the Iron Age.

This calculation, however, does not take into consideration the loss of graves in the case-study area; graves are the context par excellence for the discovery of Situla Art (see Online Resource 1). At Este and Padua alone, the two most important Atesine settlements (Fogolari, 1975, p. 64), a very high number of Iron Age graves has been lost (Gamba et al., 2013). Therefore, I believe it is more reasonable to suggest that the 306 Situla Art objects listed in Online Resource 1 account for <6% of the original number of Situla Art objects produced in the Iron Age.

## Conclusions

This paper offers scholars the chance to consider the Situla Art phenomenon in its entirety and over the long term; Online Resource 1, with my updated catalogue, lists 306 Situla Art objects, revises the date of each object, and thus provides a new baseline for discussion and future research. I provide a new working definition for this artistic tradition. The number of Situla Art objects will almost certainly increase in the future as a result of the re-assessment of old finds and new research (for example, the lack of Situla Art objects from the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of north-east Italy is odd).

Situla Art emerged through the confluence of different influences in northern Italy around the mid seventh century BC. The evidence indicates that Tyrrhenian Etruria played an important mediatory role of Orientalising influences in the emergence of Situla Art, although the background of the first artisans who produced the oldest Situla Art objects might have been grounded in Urnfield tureutic. The Adriatic route seems to have had less importance compared to the Tyrrhenian one, although it cannot be completely ruled out (see the throne from Verucchio); the Danube route seems to have contributed very little (if anything) to the emergence of Situla Art.

According to Colonna (1980), Bologna is the site where the oldest Situla Art object was produced, i.e., the *tintinnabulum*. However, Online Resource 1 suggests that the oldest Situla Art objects, dated to phase 1a (660/650–630/625 BC), were produced more or less in the same period in different areas of northern Italy, i.e., Bologna, Este, Pitino di San Severino Marche and, possibly, Sesto Calende, although the latter objects might have been imports from Este (Voltolini, 2020, p. 32). As claimed by Frey (1969, p. 87), this pattern might suggest the presence of a large area affected by Orientalising influences as a result of interaction with the Etruscans, perhaps as far the present-day Czech Republic (Chytráček et al., 2019). This is a phase of experimentation in northern Italy, with Este becoming the key centre of this new aristocratic artistic phenomenon as suggested by the distribution maps in Fig. 6.

Although the situla is still the emblematic form defining this art, at least from phase 2b (550/530–520/510 BC; see Online Resource 1) belt plates assume more

importance in the archaeological record; they mostly show animal-related motifs. This seems to have been a crucial phase in the area considered especially in terms of changing socio-political arrangements (see Colonna, 1980; Zaghetto, 2006). Moreover, charioteers and horsemen wearing Phrygian hats dated to Situla Art phase 3b (500/480–475/450 BC; e.g., the Kuffarn and Arnoaldi situlas) might suggest that from this archaeological phase the Danube route could have had a major influence on Situla Art. Scythian influence is suggested for this archaeological phase at Stična through the personal ornaments discovered in the female grave 27 within mound 48 (Teržan & Hellmuth, 2008, p. 188). Is it possible that in this phase Phrygian horsemen/charioteers were in high demand thanks to their riding skills? Another possibility is that the Phrygian hat as a motif was simply borrowed from Greek art.

In the literature, Situla Art has been linked to the elite. This is because of the motifs depicted, the intrinsic value of the sheet-bronze objects (sometimes kept as family heirlooms), the presence of ancient repairs, the amount of time needed to produce both the support and decoration (113 h needed to reproduce the Benvvenuti situla; Buson, 2017, p. 286; and 206 h needed to reproduce the Certosa situla; Buson, 2022, p. 496), and because many Situla Art objects were found in wealthy graves sometimes attributed to female individuals. This is a question which has been underestimated in the literature given that, except for the *tintinnabulum* and possibly the Pieve d'Alpago situla, male individuals, if not animals, are generally depicted as the protagonists of Situla Art motifs.

To conclude. Situla Art is an elite production to be dated between 660/650 and 275 BC. This Iron Age artisanal tradition used sheet-bronze decorated supports showing Orientalising themes re-elaborated in local taste to link elite groups located in a peculiar geographical area, naturally bordered by the Apennines and the Alps, for about 400 years. Its 'anachronistic' Orientalising taste, most probably initially mediated through Tyrrhenian Etruria, has to be seen as the specific artistic language that the elites in the Situla Art area decided to employ to legitimise their power over time but also to create solidarity and facilitate interaction. A pivotal role should be recognised to the elite at Este who seems to have promoted this 'new means of communication' (Perego, 2013, p. 257) able to bridge communities geographically apart and speaking different languages.

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