

SVENSKA INSTITUTEN I ATHEN OCH ROM
INSTITUTUM ATHENIENSE ATQUE INSTITUTUM ROMANUM REGNI SUECIAE

Opuscula

Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome

13
2020

STOCKHOLM

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Prof. Gunnel Ekroth, Uppsala, Chairman
Dr Lena Sjögren, Stockholm, Vice-chairman
Mrs Kristina Björkstén Jersenius, Stockholm, Treasurer
Dr Susanne Berndt, Stockholm, Secretary
Prof. Christer Henriksen, Uppsala
Prof. Anne-Marie Leander Touati, Lund
Prof. Peter M. Fischer, Göteborg
Dr David Westberg, Uppsala
Dr Sabrina Norlander-Eliasson, Stockholm
Dr Lewis Webb, Göteborg
Dr Ulf R. Hansson, Rome
Dr Jenny Wallensten, Athens

EDITOR

Dr Julia Habetzeder
Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies
Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
editor@ecsi.se

SECRETARY'S ADDRESS

Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies
Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
secretary@ecsi.se

DISTRIBUTOR

eddy.se ab
Box 1310
SE-621 24 Visby

For general information, see <http://ecsi.se>
For subscriptions, prices and delivery, see <http://ecsi.bokorder.se>
Published with the aid of a grant from The Swedish Research Council (2017-01912)
The English text was revised by Rebecca Montague, Hindon, Salisbury, UK

Opuscula is a peer reviewed journal. Contributions to *Opuscula* should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee before 1 November every year. Contributors are requested to include an abstract summarizing the main points and principal conclusions of their article. For style of references to be adopted, see <http://ecsi.se>. Books for review should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee.

ISSN 2000-0898
ISBN 978-91-977799-2-0
© Svenska Institutet i Athen and Svenska Institutet i Rom
Printed by TMG Sthlm, Sweden 2020
Cover illustrations from Aiopoulou *et al.* in this volume, p. 48.

Erik Wetter and the genesis of the San Giovenale excavations

Abstract

The Swedish excavations at San Giovenale (1956–1965) had a major impact in the field of pre-Roman archaeology in Italy, primarily through the discovery of remains of both Etruscan and earlier domestic architecture. This article examines the genesis of the project, and suggests that the early history of the project has sometimes been misrepresented. While the excavations came to serve as a training-ground for young Swedish archaeologists and made very important contributions to the study of ancient domestic architecture, these were not explicit goals at the conception of the project. The article also studies the peculiar role of Admiral Erik Wetter in the San Giovenale excavations. Despite not being an archaeologist himself, Wetter was both the instigator and, in many ways, the driving force behind the project. The result was an unusual and unclear leadership situation, something that in the long run created problems for the project.*

Keywords: San Giovenale, Erik Wetter, History of archaeology, Swedish Institute in Rome

<https://doi.org/10.30549/opathrom-13-09>

The Swedish excavations at San Giovenale (1956–1965) had a major impact in the field of pre-Roman archaeology in Italy, primarily through the uncovering of remains of both Etruscan and earlier domestic architecture. In Volume 1 of the official reports, Carl Eric Östenberg wrote the following about the excavations: “Their purpose, formulated in the program at the very beginning of the enterprise was to try to shed light on the architecture and urbanism of the Archaic settlement. But the picture would have been incomplete if the grave-fields had been totally neglected.”¹ Correspondence in the archive of the Swedish Institute in Rome shows that this is a revisionist description of the project’s early history. Contrary to Östenberg’s claim, the original goal was to excavate the Etruscan tombs at the site, and only after a disappointing first season did the focus shift to the settlement plateau. Another claim is that the excavations were the result of the Swedish Institute in Rome looking for a place to train young Swedish archaeologists.² This also, as will be shown below, does not accurately describe the process which led up to the first excavation season in 1956.

The archival material studied here consists primarily of correspondence preserved in the archive of the Swedish Institute in Rome, and more specifically the section devoted to the San Giovenale excavations.³ It consists mostly of letters to or from the director and the secretary of the Institute.⁴ The

* I am grateful to Johannes Siapkas and Rachael Tobin-Dodd for commenting on early drafts of this article and to Thomas Roth for help with the translation of some Swedish military terms. Comments from the anonymous reviewers further helped improve the text. Translations of the correspondence to English have been undertaken by the present author; the original wording is presented in the notes. The writing of this article was supported by a grant from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (FS2016-0158).

¹ *San Giovenale* I:4, 3. The best general introductions to the site and the excavations are *Materiali e problemi* 1984 and *Architettura etrusca* 1986.

² *San Giovenale* I:1, 3.

³ Large parts of the archive of the Swedish Institute in Rome has over the years been transferred to the Swedish National Archives, Riksarkivet (Whitling 2019, 142–143 n. 32). However, materials pertaining specifically to the San Giovenale excavations have so far been kept in Rome.

⁴ During the period when the San Giovenale excavations began, Axel Boëthius served as the director of the Swedish Institute in Rome. He had a long history in Rome, having been appointed the Institute’s first direc-



Fig. 1. Erik Wetter (left). Courtesy of the Swedish Institute in Rome.

limitations of this material are quite apparent. The perspectives it presents are those belonging to the leadership of the Institute. Viewpoints not represented are for example those of the Italian authorities or those of the more junior participants in the project. Thus, the main goal of this article is to see how the claims made by Östenberg and others correspond to the events of 1955 and 1956 as they were described by the leadership of the Institute in the preserved letters.

Erik Wetter

The impetus to excavate at San Giovenale came from Erik Wetter, a naval officer, businessman, and for many years the treasurer of the Swedish Institute in Rome (Fig. 1).⁵ He held important positions in several companies in the Broström business group and in major Swedish companies like SKF and

tor back in 1925 (Billig, Billig & Whitling 2015, 75–77). After retiring from his job as professor at University of Gothenburg, he returned to Rome in 1955. Gino Filipetto was hired as secretary and librarian of the Institute in 1945, and for several decades played a key role in the daily operations of the Institute (Billig, Billig & Whitling 2015, 201–202).

⁵ The biographical information comes from documents in Wetter's archive at the Swedish National Archives, reference code: SE/RA/721314/II. Especially important is a manuscript for a talk given by him at his old school Norra Latin on 9 December 1966, Swedish National Archives, reference code: SE/RA/721314/II/II a)/19.

Bofors. He was born in Stockholm on 4 April 1889 to parents Albert Petersson and Ada Wetter.⁶ As a child, Wetter went to school at Norra Latin in Stockholm for five years before entering the Royal Swedish Naval Academy in the autumn of 1902, aged 13. The decision to become a naval officer was his parents' and not his own, and later in life he would lament the fact that he never got the chance to study the humanities. He graduated in 1908 and then began serving in the Swedish Navy. By the time of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 he had become the captain of a torpedo boat.

Once the war had ended, Wetter travelled to Italy in December 1919 for studies in the Italian Navy. He served on the battleship *Andrea Doria* and on the destroyer *Francesco Stocco* and underwent training at the Royal Naval Academy (*Regia Accademia Navale*) in Livorno. During his time in Italy he contracted scarlet fever, but he recovered and was able to return to Sweden in 1921. During the following years he, among other things, served as an instructor at the Royal Swedish Naval Academy and the Royal Swedish Army Staff College. He married Maja Carlander, daughter of Axel Carlander and Hedvig Hildebrand, in Örgryte Old Church on 17 December 1924. Maja's father and brother were both influential businessmen and her maternal grandfather was none other than the archaeologist Hans Hildebrand.

⁶ Information on his parents and siblings can be found in Wetter & Lundgren 1984, 104–107.

One of Wetter's tasks from 1919–1925 was to serve as adjutant to the commander of the Coastal Fleet.⁷ Shortly thereafter, in 1927, he was appointed adjutant to Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf. During the same period he served as secretary on two political committees working on issues pertaining to the Swedish armed forces. One of the resulting reports, *Betänkande och förslag rörande den centrala försvarsförvaltningen*, was met with heavy criticism from most of the Swedish admirals for its proposed changes to the organization of the leadership of the Swedish Navy.⁸ Wetter was transferred to Karlskrona soon after, a move he interpreted as a punishment for his involvement in the writing of the report. The situation led him to ask to leave the Navy in 1929. He remained without pay for two more years, until he officially started his civilian career in 1931 when he took the position as head of the Swedish Orient Line (Svenska Orient Linien) and vice managing director of Ångfartygsaktiebolaget Tirfing, the mother company of the Broström business group. His new civilian career meant that he had to relocate to Gothenburg, but he maintained contacts with the royal court in Stockholm. When the crown prince and his wife embarked on their journey to the Levant and Egypt in 1934–1935, they travelled on the Swedish Orient Line's new vessel Vasaland with Erik Wetter as the on-board host.⁹

During the Second World War, Wetter returned to the Swedish Navy from 1943 to 1945 to work as the deputy director of the Swedish Navy Board and was promoted to rear admiral (konteramiral). In 1945 he returned to work at the Swedish Orient Line, and the same year he began a short stint as a member of the First Chamber of the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament). He soon felt forced to choose between business and politics and therefore left the Riksdag in 1947. During this period of his life he received a number of new duties. Most notably he became chairman of the board of arms manufacturer Bofors in 1946, a post he held until 1966.

Wetter's involvement in the Swedish Institute in Rome went back at least to 1938, when he became a member of its board. In 1948 he succeeded Axel Hallin as the treasurer of the Institute, a position from which he would come to exert a great influence on its operations. That Wetter, just like Hallin, had a close relationship to Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf, surely was an important factor in him being asked to fill the position. On 1 April 1952 Wetter became First Marshal of the Court, a job that required him to move from Gothenburg to Stockholm. This meant that Wetter regularly would accompany the king on trips abroad, trips that often involved visiting archaeo-

logical sites. It seems highly likely that the king's strong interest in archaeology affected Wetter.

The genesis of the San Giovenale excavations

On 11 October 1955, Erik Wetter and his wife Maja Wetter boarded a train in Stockholm and began a journey to Italy. Wetter's explicit goal for the trip was to visit Etruscan sites. After arriving in Florence on 13 October, they started making their way through Etruria by car. They were at some point joined by Gino Filipetto, secretary and librarian of the Swedish Institute in Rome. The itinerary was ambitious and included, among other things, planned visits to sites in northern Lazio such as Castel d'Asso, Norchia, Blera, Barbarano Romano, and Tolfa. It seems probable that it was during the visit to Blera and Barbarano Romano that they also went to see San Giovenale. After returning to Sweden, Wetter wrote to Filipetto to ask him about the possibility of getting a permit for a three-week excavation campaign at the site, saying that "I think it would be better that we did such an excavation rather than letting the farmers go at it at night and removing what might be there."¹⁰ During their visit they had seen evidence of recent looting, something that apparently had sparked the interest of Wetter. After receiving a reply from Filipetto, which seems to have been positive, Wetter then wrote to the director of the Swedish Institute in Rome, Axel Boëthius, for his opinion on the matter. Wetter described the visit to the site and once again referred to the activities of looters:

After our visit to San Giovenale, lying in virginal desolation, where you could see how clandestine excavations have taken place at night, my mind has been playing with the idea of getting the opportunity to do a small but correct excavation of a small part of the necropolis there [...] It is probably not of interest for a larger expedition, but the striking nature of the place encourages further investigation.¹¹

⁷ First under Carl August Ehrensvärd and then his successors Carl Alarik Wachtmeister and Fredrik Riben.

⁸ *SOU* 1927:29. As explained by Wetter in the talk at Norra Latin mentioned in note 5.

⁹ *SvD* 1935, 3.

¹⁰ "Jag tycker nämligen det vore bättre att vi gjorde en sådan utgrävning än att låta bönderna hålla på där på nätterna och taga bort det som eventuellt finnes." Erik Wetter to Gino Filipetto 6 December 1955.

¹¹ "Efter vårt besök i San Giovenale, som låg så jungfruligt öde och där man kunde se, hur rövargrävningar ägt rum på nätterna, leker det mig i tankarna möjligheten att kunna få tillfälle att göra en liten men riktigt utgrävning av en mindre del utav den nekropol, som där finnes. [...] Den kan nog inte vara av intresse för någon större expedition, men platsens tjugiga natur lockar till en fortsatt undersökning." Erik Wetter to Axel Boëthius 20 December 1955.

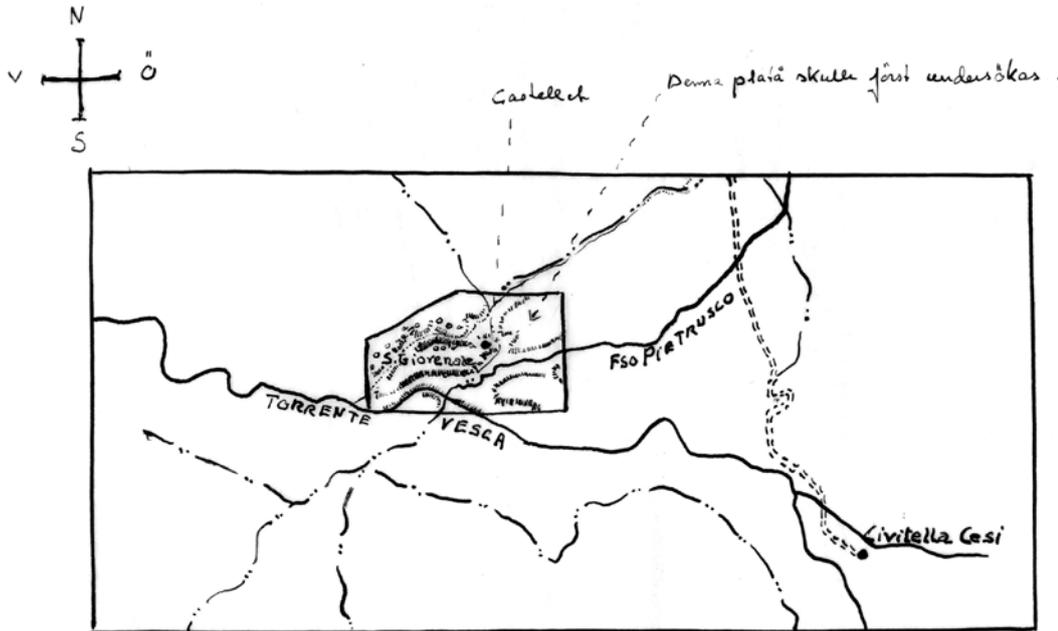


Fig. 2. Map of San Giovenale by Erik Wetter, with indications of the medieval castle and the plateau that he wanted to investigate, Casale Vignale. Courtesy of the Swedish Institute in Rome.

As for the practicalities, Wetter offered to pay for the excavation himself and suggested that Boëthius send one of his “younger assistants”.¹² In both his letter to Filipetto and in his subsequent letter to Boëthius, Wetter specifically mentioned Eric Berggren. Berggren had participated in the Swedish excavations at Labraunda, Turkey in 1950, 1951, and 1953, so he already had excavation experience. Berggren’s participation was, however, uncertain for some time. He had been offered a job at the library of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, an offer he eventually turned down in order to complete his doctoral degree and pursue an academic career.¹³ Berggren was thus able to participate, and became the *de facto* field director of the 1956 excavations.

It is clear, that when Wetter first visited San Giovenale he thought the site more or less unknown to the scholarly community. Filipetto had even suggested to Guglielmo De Angelis d’Ossat, then direttore generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti, that the site be named “Necropoli dell’Ammiraglio”.¹⁴ However, when Wetter discovered that the site was mentioned in Åkerström’s 1934 doctoral dissertation on Etruscan tomb architecture¹⁵ he asked Filipetto to be cautious:

I am not so sure that San Giovenale is as unknown as we thought, especially since I find it mentioned quite long ago in Åkerström’s dissertation, briefly but still. So be cautious with your naming proposals. This does not, however, interfere with my idea that one should conduct an excavation at the site, because I do not think that the necropolis Åkerström mentions is the one that we surveyed.¹⁶

Contrary to Wetter’s opinion, there can be little doubt that the necropolis he visited and the one Åkerström described are the same. A letter from Wetter to Boëthius dated 20 February 1956 contains a map where Wetter clearly singles out the plateau north-east of San Giovenale, the Casale Vignale necropolis, as the area he would like to investigate and, consequently, must have been the one he visited (Fig. 2). The fact that Åkerström only reported already published information without adding anything new, suggests that he probably never visited San Giovenale himself while working on his dissertation. The

¹² “Kostnaderna skulle jag naturligtvis bära själv men behöver naturligtvis någon av Dina yngre assistenter till min hjälp, exempelvis Berggren, som tydligen är mycket intresserad av olika skärvor.” Erik Wetter to Axel Boëthius 20 December 1955.

¹³ Axel Boëthius to Erik Wetter 15 June 1956.

¹⁴ Erik Wetter to Gino Filipetto 6 December 1955.

¹⁵ Åkerström 1934, 90–91.

¹⁶ “Emellertid är jag inte alldeles så säker på att San Giovenale är så okänt som vi trott, särskilt som jag finner i Åkerströms avhandling för ganska länge sedan orten omnämnd, visserligen mycket kort, men den finns dock där. Var försiktig alltså med Dina förslag om benämningen. Detta bindrar i alla fall inte alls min tanke, att man borde göra en utgrävning på platsen, ty jag tror icke att den nekropolis, som Åkerström omnämmer, verkligen är den som vi rekognocerade.” Erik Wetter to Gino Filipetto 19 December 1955.

two works that Åkerström referenced both deal with tombs at Casale Vignale specifically.¹⁷

Having received Wetter's letter, Boëthius proceeded to contact Renato Bartoccini, the superintendent for South Etruria, to procure an excavation permit. In a letter to Wetter dated 28 January 1956, Boëthius replied that Bartoccini supported the idea of an excavation. Boëthius also explained the conditions of the enterprise:

The superintendent is wholly positive, directly thankful even, for your proposal to intervene at San Giovenale and welcomes you heartily. The rule for these Italian excavations is that to the city—Y o u r city—should belong an Italian archaeologist (in this case [Mario] Moretti, a very decent person) and one or more students from the foreign academy.¹⁸

Boëthius, in the same letter, also recommended that Sture Brunnsåker participate and suggested that Wetter should consider getting Arne Furumark involved. Wetter's response to Boëthius was positive when it came to Moretti (Fig. 3) and Brunnsåker but less so in the case of Furumark:

If I understand things correctly it is possible to do an, initially very small, excavation that would primarily focus on the tombs that lie above the rock tombs and that now seem to have been subject to looting. Presently, I do not want a larger expedition, but the Italian archaeologist is of course welcome, as is Brunnsåker. I would not like to involve Furumark, even if I do not know him that well. Right now, I am not positive toward him and I do not wish that he finds out about these plans, which I would like to keep confidential.¹⁹

Wetter's opinion of Furumark might have been affected by the recent process of hiring a professor at the University of



Fig. 3. From left to right: Gino Filippetto, unknown, Mario Moretti, Erik Wetter, and Krister Hanell on a visit to Luni sul Mignone 15 November 1962. Photograph by Carl-Eric Östenberg. Courtesy of the Swedish Institute in Rome.

Gothenburg. Furumark had written an evaluation of Åke Åkerström that Boëthius in a letter to Wetter just a few weeks earlier had characterized as “distorted and personal.”²⁰ It is also possible that Wetter simply wanted to avoid having a senior archaeologist directly involved that would challenge his leadership of the project. Boëthius, as the director of the Swedish Institute in Rome, of course had to be formally involved but it is evident that he was not interested in taking over the leadership from Wetter. When Boëthius wrote to Wetter in the time leading up to the first excavation campaign, he repeatedly referred to the project as “Your excavation”:

Gino Filippetto and I will as soon as possible make a draft of the application to the authorities regarding Your excavation, starting from the prejudicating cases regarding the permits for the institutes to enable their students to get field experience. The end-result will of course be that we will get very free hands and, unfortunately in my view, will rarely be visited by our Italian colleagues.²¹

¹⁷ Tobin 2014a, 213–214. For a discussion of archaeological work at San Giovenale before the Swedish excavations, see Tobin 2015, 204–207.

¹⁸ “Generaldirektören är helt positiv, ja direkt tacksam för Ditt uppslag att ingripa i San Giovenale och hälsar Dig hjärtligt välkommen. Regeln för dessa italiensk utgrävningar är, att till staden—D i n stad—bör höra en italiensk arkeolog (i detta fall Moretti, mycket hygglig) och en eller flera studenter från den utländska akademien.” Axel Boëthius to Erik Wetter 28 January 1956.

¹⁹ “Om jag förstår rätt är det tydligen möjligt att få göra en till en början mycket liten utgrävning, som framför allt skulle inrikta sig på de gravar, som ligga ovanför klippgravarna och som nu tyckas vara utsatta för en viss skövling. Jag vill inte för närvarande ha någon större expedition, men naturligtvis är den italienske arkeologen synnerligen välkommen och likaså Brunnsåker. Jag skulle inte gärna vilja ha Furumark med, även om jag inte känner honom så väl. Men för närvarande är jag icke positivt inställd till honom och jag vill inte gärna, att han skall få reda på dessa planer, som jag helst vill hålla konfidentiellt.” Erik Wetter to Axel Boëthius 1 February 1956.

²⁰ “snedvridet och personligt” Axel Boëthius to Erik Wetter 13 January 1956.

²¹ “Gino Filippetto och jag skola snarast uppsätta förslag om skrivelse till myndigheterna angående Din utgrävning med utgångspunkt från prejudikaten ifråga om permessi för instituten, för att tillskynda dessas studenter fältvana. Slutresultatet blir naturligtvis, att vi få mycket fria händer och,

Even when talking to people outside the Swedish Institute in Rome it was clear that the project was not primarily the Institute's but rather Wetter's. Boëthius, for example, wrote to Åkerström to ask for some equipment back: "The thing is that Erik Wetter is planning Etruscan excavations (at San Giovenale to begin with) and we must therefore have our machinery back."²² In Boëthius' letter to the Italian authorities he laid out the goals for the project: excavating tombs and providing training for Swedish students:

The purpose of this excavation is to bring to light possible remains of Etruscan chamber tombs, pozzo tombs and fossa tombs, that were partially discovered during a trip in November 1955, to save for culture's sake the material that might still exist in these tombs and, at the same time, to give archaeology students of this Institute the opportunity to obtain a valuable and direct field experience.²³

Getting permission to excavate does not seem to have been a problem. Bartocchini even suggested that the excavations take place at a site richer in finds, as described in a letter from Boëthius to Wetter:

At that point the superintendent worried that San Giovenale would be a site poor in finds and wanted to offer a different site where he believed finds to be certain; he did this without wanting to retract the permit for San Giovenale, only out of benevolence, in case You wanted to switch.²⁴

Wetter's reply reveals that he already had a certain personal attachment to the site:

I am fully aware of and believe that S. Giovenale is a site poor in finds, but I requested it on purpose, since I believed it would be easier to get permission at such a dis-

tant and godforsaken location. If the Superintendent would want to give me a different and better place, I would of course be very grateful, but I would like to leave that to Your judgment. What place would it be? This I would be very interested to know.²⁵

He then went on to say:

Dear Axel, it would of course be more enjoyable for the Institute and also for the King and You if it were a better site, so of course I would agree with it if You think so. Could I not do some surveying at San Giovenale for just a few days anyway?²⁶

Although Blera was mentioned in the discussions about where to dig, the primary alternative that was eventually proposed was the nearby site of Luni sul Mignone (referred to in the correspondence as Monte Fortino). On 20 July 1956, Luni sul Mignone was visited by a group of Swedish and Italians to evaluate its potential. The site seems to have impressed the visitors, but there were obvious logistical issues to be solved. The main problem with Luni sul Mignone was that the site was not accessible by car, and so the decision was made to stay with San Giovenale for the 1956 field season.

That the king of Sweden, Gustaf VI Adolf, would be involved in the project was inevitable given his interest in archaeology, his personal involvement in the Swedish Institute in Rome, and his close connection to Wetter (who was First Marshal of the Court at the time). Boëthius presented the project to the king in a letter and laid out its structure:

The leadership: is shared in equal parts between the superintendent, represented by Dr. Moretti (whose travels and daily expenses the excavation, i.e. Erik Wetter, has to pay. This is however included in the calculated 5,000 SEK for everything) and (just as Your Majesty intended) the director of the Swedish Institute represented by a field assistant. In reality Wetter and our field assistant, together with those from Your Majesty's

tyvärr, måste jag säga, sällan besök av våra italienska medarbetare." Axel Boëthius to Erik Wetter 21 February 1956.

²² "Saken är den, att Erik Wetter planerar etruskiska utgrävningar (till att börja med i San Giovenale) och vi måste därför ha åter vår apparatur." Axel Boëthius to Åke Åkerström 7 March 1956.

²³ "Scopo di tale scavo è di mettere in luce eventuali resti di tombe di epoca etrusca a camera, a pozzo ed a fossa, parzialmente individuate nel corso di una escursione nel mese di novembre 1955, salvare alla cultura il materiale forse ancora esistente in quelle tombe e dare, allo stesso tempo, occasione agli studenti di archeologia di questo Istituto di conseguire una preziosa e diretta esperienza di campo." Axel Boëthius to Renato Bartocchini 27 March 1956.

²⁴ "I detta sammanhang oroade sig överintendenten för att S. Giovenale skulle vara en fyndfattig plats och ville gärna erbjuda Dig en annan, där han trodde på säkra fynd; detta naturligtvis utan att ett ögonblick vilja rubba på det givna grävningstillståndet i S. Giovenale, endast av välvilja, i fall Du skulle vilja byta." Axel Boëthius to Erik Wetter 25 June 1956.

²⁵ "Jag är fullt medveten om och tror, efter att ha studerat alla handlingarna helt och hållet, att S. Giovenale är en fyndfattig plats, men med avsikt begärda jag denna, då jag trodde det var lättare att få tillstånd på en så avlägsen och gudsförgäten plats. Skulle Överintendenten vilja giva mig en annan och bättre plats, är jag naturligtvis ytterligt tacksam, men vill överlåta det helt och hållet till Din uppfattning. Vad skulle det vara för plats? Därom är jag ypperligt intresserad att veta." Erik Wetter to Axel Boëthius 28 June 1956.

²⁶ "Kära Axel, det skulle naturligtvis för Institutet vara roligare och även för Konungen och Dig, om det bleve en bättre fyndplats, så det är klart, att jag gärna vill gå in på det, om Du så tycker. Jag kan väl i alla fall få rekognoscera några dagar i S. Giovenale." Erik Wetter to Axel Boëthius 28 June 1956.

party that will join, will probably be rather alone on the site.²⁷

In preparation of the excavations, the Leric Foundation, under the supervision of John Spencer Purvis Bradford, conducted geophysical surveying in the area around the site from 21–23 September 1956.²⁸ Sture Brunnsåker, then acting director of the Swedish Institute in Rome, wrote a report these preliminary investigations, revealing that a number of areas were considered for excavation. Carlo Leric had suggested an area to the north-east, where aerial photography suggested circular structures, and Mario Moretti had suggested the Casale Vignale necropolis. The area that Brunnsåker and Bradford recommended for excavation was the Porzarago necropolis, the location where they thought it was most likely that an unlooted tomb could be found:

This area was deemed by Mr and Mrs Bradford as the most promising place for an investigation. I agree with them fully on this. Mr Bradford estimates the work force needed to around 10 people, seeing that the area has been so extensively looted that surely many fruitless soundings will have to be made until you would strike an unlooted tomb.²⁹

When the Swedish San Giovenale excavations began in October 1956, it was indeed at this location.³⁰

The San Giovenale excavations and post-war Italy

Exactly what prompted Wetter to visit Etruria in 1955 is not clear. The post-war period was however a time of increased inter-

est in the Etruscans in general, both in Italy and abroad. It has been suggested that Roman archaeology fell out of favour in Italy after the Second World War, to the benefit of other aspects of ancient Italy, as a result of the fascist emphasis on *romanità*, or “roman-ness”.³¹ Renato Bartoccini, mentioned above in his role as superintendent of South Etruria when the San Giovenale excavations began, took over leadership of the Etruscan Museum at the Villa Giulia in Rome in 1950. Under his leadership the museum was reworked, and the first of its new sections opened in 1955.³² For decades, the Villa Giulia was the only modern archaeological museum in Rome.³³ In Zürich, an exhibition called “*Kunst und Leben der Etrusker*” opened on 15 January 1955 and in Milan an expanded version called “*Mostra dell’Arte e della Civiltà Etrusca*” opened on 23 April the same year.³⁴ The exhibition went on to a number of European museums, including Kunsternes Hus in Oslo, where it opened on 28 January 1956.

Post-war Italy enjoyed a time of increased international co-operation in the field of archaeology. Since the creation of the modern state of Italy in the 19th century, laws and policies had limited the possibilities for foreign archaeologists to conduct fieldwork.³⁵ After the Second World War, things changed quickly. Bolsena became the first major foreign excavation site when the French School of Rome began working there in 1946. Next in line were the American excavation at Cosa (1948) and the Belgian excavation at Alba Fucens (1949).³⁶ The Swedish Institute was well positioned to participate in the new wave of foreign excavations. It was the only foreign school in Rome to have remained operational throughout the Second World War. As such it came to play an important role in the scholarly life of post-war Rome and had, according to Boëthius, gathered a capital of good will.³⁷ In 1952 and 1953 Arvid Andrén had excavated, at a modest scale, at Ardea, which must have demonstrated to Wetter that undertaking a small excavation in Italy was entirely possible.³⁸

Another relevant development in Italy during the late 1940s and early 1950s was the rapid mechanization of agriculture and

²⁷ “*Ledningen: denna tillkommer med delat lika ansvar överintendenten företrädd av Dr. Moretti (vars resor och dagtraktamenten utgrävningen, d.v.s. Erik Wetter, måste betala. Detta är dock inbegripet i kalkulerade 5.000 kronor för det hela) och (precis som Eders Majestät tänkt sig) föreståndaren för Svenska Institutet företrädd av en fältassistent. I verkligheten bli nog Wetter och vår fältassistent jämte de av Eders Majestäts grupp, som ansluta sig, ganska ensamma på platsen.*” Axel Boëthius to Gustaf VI Adolf 4 July 1956.

²⁸ Bradford was a British archaeologist specializing in the archaeological use of aerial photographs, which were also used in the preparatory stages of the excavations. Leric was an Italian engineer and industrialist who pioneered geophysical prospection techniques for archaeological purposes.
²⁹ “*Detta område bedömdes av Mr and Mrs Bradford som den mest lovande platsen för en undersökning. Jag instämmer helt med dem däri. Mr Bradford uppskattade den behövliga arbetsstyrkan till ca 10 man, i betraktande av att området är så starkt utplundrat och säkerligen många resultatlösa sonderingar måste företas innan man stöter på någon oplundrad grav.*” Unpublished report written by Sture Brunnsåker titled “*Sonderingar i trakten av San Giovenale*”, dated 24 September 1956.

³⁰ *San Giovenale* I:5, 9.

³¹ Dyson 2019, 218.

³² Delpino 2006, 19.

³³ Dyson 2019, 219.

³⁴ Baglione 2010, 50.

³⁵ Dyson 2006, 228; Whitling 2019, 32–35. This by no means meant that it was impossible for foreign archaeologists to excavate in Italy. See Billig, Billig & Whitling 2015, 211–215 for a discussion of Swedish excavation projects in Italy predating San Giovenale.

³⁶ Dyson 2006, 228–230.

³⁷ Whitling 2019, 178. See Whitling 2019, 167–172 for Sjöqvist’s role in the creation of the Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica and the Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia, Storia e Storia dell’Arte in Roma, two important organizations in Rome’s scholarly life following the Second World War.

³⁸ Andrén had already conducted a small excavation in Ardea in 1940, when the construction of a new school had brought to light architectural terracottas (Billig, Billig & Whitling 2015, 361 n. 398).

the widespread construction of buildings in the countryside by the government body Ente Maremma.³⁹ As the intensity of farming increased many archaeological sites were discovered and many were damaged. With new discoveries came also an increase in the activities of illegal excavators. An interesting parallel to San Giovenale is Bisenzio, where finds due to farming and illegal excavations during 1955 and 1956 led Giuseppe Foti to begin excavations there.⁴⁰ This situation meant that the Italian authorities during this period likely had a positive view toward archaeological projects aimed at limiting the damage done by looting. This is of course the justification that Boëthius used in his request for an excavation permit to Bartoccini on 27 March 1956 (see note 23 above). In Boëthius' account of the beginnings of the project, the excavations were the result of two different, but simultaneous, proposals. He states that while Wetter was proposing excavations at San Giovenale, Bartoccini suggested that the Swedish Institute excavate in Etruria.⁴¹ The specifics of Bartoccini's invitation is unknown, and more importantly, since Wetter and Boëthius do not mention it in their correspondence, it is clear that it was not a factor for Wetter.

By the 1950s, there was already an established interest in the Etruscans among Swedish archaeologists. The doctoral dissertations of Åke Åkerström (1934) and Arvid Andrén (1940) both concerned Etruscan archaeology, and Erik Sjöqvist (director of the Swedish Institute from 1940 to 1948) had unsuccessfully applied for an excavation permit in the Etruscan city of Veii in 1942.⁴² Gösta Säflund, Einar Gjerstad, Arne Furumark, Axel Boëthius, and others all published articles and books on Italian prehistory, early Rome, and the Etruscans from the 1930s and onward.⁴³ It is interesting to note that Wetter did not ask any of these to participate in the San Giovenale excavations in 1956, instead opting to work with Erik Berggren.⁴⁴ This is a clear reflection of the genesis of the San Giovenale excavations not as a venture by the Swedish scholarly community, but as a personal project of Erik Wetter.

Erik Wetter—amateur archaeologist and leader

Although Wetter initiated the San Giovenale excavations, he did not really participate in the actual digging himself: instead

³⁹ Delpino 2006, 20; Wetter 1962, 166.

⁴⁰ Delpino 2006, 20–22.

⁴¹ Boëthius 1962, xii–xiii.

⁴² Whitling 2010, 186.

⁴³ Gren 1960, 347–352.

⁴⁴ With the obvious exception of Boëthius who was scientifically responsible for the venture, but who does not seem to have participated in the digging.

he preferred to travel around the surrounding area surveying ancient monuments and roads. He did not participate in the writing of any of the official San Giovenale or Acquarossa volumes, but he did publish reports on his surveys around both sites.⁴⁵ He summed up his involvement in a talk he gave in 1966:

As the treasurer, and eventually vice chairman in the boards of the [Swedish] Rome Institute and of [Villa] San Michele, I maintain a strong interest in these institutions, and through this I have also got a small compensation for the fact that I did not get to occupy myself with the Humanities. In particular, it was archaeological problems that interested me, and during the last ten years, my perhaps dilettante research has been focused on the topography of the ancient world of the Etruscans. Almost every year, I have wandered around with some simple good Italian friends and walked mile after mile on old Etruscan roads. I wanted to become so acquainted with the nature and the human modifications that have been done to it so I could get an idea of what had happened there in Antiquity, and so learn where the old cult sites could be sought.⁴⁶

Amateur, or avocational, archaeologists played an important role in the development of the discipline in the 19th century, but eventually met resistance as the field became increasingly professionalized.⁴⁷ By the mid-20th century, a non-archaeologist instigating excavations like Wetter did was certainly an anomaly.⁴⁸ What set Wetter apart from other amateur enthusiasts of the mid-20th century was his deep involvement in the running of an archaeological institute, and control of its

⁴⁵ For the San Giovenale area see Wetter 1960 and 1962; for Acquarossa see Wetter 1969 and 1972. His other published texts concerned the Wetter family (Wetter 1955; Wetter & Lundgren 1984) and the history of the Swedish Institute in Rome (Wetter 1970 and 1976).

⁴⁶ "Som skattmästare och sedermera vice ordförande i Rominstitutets och San Micheles styrelser har jag alltjämt ett stort intresse för dessa institutioner, och därigenom har jag också fått en liten kompensation för att jag icke fick ägna mig åt humaniora. Särskilt var det arkeologiska problem som intresserade mig, och under de senaste 10 åren har min tyvärr kanske dilettantiska forskning inriktats på topografin inom etruskernas gamla värld. Så gott som varje år har jag strövat omkring med några enkla goda italienska vänner och travat miltals på gamla etruskiska vägar. Jag ville bli så förtrogen med naturen och de mänskliga förändringar som gjorts i den att jag skulle kunna bilda mig en uppfattning om vad som hänt där i antikens dagar, och på så sätt finna var de gamla kultplatserna var att söka." Manuscript for a talk at Norra Latin in 1966: Swedish National Archives, reference code: SE/RA/721314/II/II a)/19.

⁴⁷ Diaz-Andreu 2007, 271, 391.

⁴⁸ As seen in the quote above, Wetter never presented himself as an archaeologist or a scholar. Indeed, he began his chapter in *Etruscan culture, land and people* with the sentence: "This chapter was not written by a scholar" (Wetter 1962, 165).



Fig. 5. Bronze plaque of Erik Wetter at the Swedish Institute in Rome.
Photo Fredrik Tobin-Dodd.

or publishing to any significant degree. Instead, the *de facto* leader of the fieldwork in the early years was Eric Berggren. With time, as the project grew, Berggren's responsibilities diminished and people like Carl Eric Östenberg, Arne Furumark, and Carl Nylander came to take on different leadership roles. These responsibilities, however, were never formalized, resulting in a lack of cohesion in methodology and terminology across the different excavation areas. The excavations never implemented any standardized way of registering finds, nor a standardized nomenclature for trenches.⁵² Östenberg went on to direct the excavations at Acquarossa in 1966 and from that point had little time to spare for the San Giovenale excavations. Furumark, disgruntled with working under Wetter, never published his excavations.⁵³ Carl Nylander, in his role as director of the Swedish Institute in Rome, would be the one to take charge of the publication project from the 1980s and onwards.⁵⁴ The actual job of publishing the excavations has largely been carried out by archaeologists such as Ingrid Pohl, Lars Karlsson, Yvonne Backe-Forsberg, and others.⁵⁵

⁵² Instead a number of different systems have been used over the years. As an example, see the different names used for the houses in Area F East (*San Giovenale* IV:1, 21).

⁵³ They were eventually published in *San Giovenale* IV:1.

⁵⁴ See *San Giovenale* V:1, 21–28 for a personal account of Nylander's involvement in the San Giovenale excavations.

⁵⁵ See for example *San Giovenale* V:2, *San Giovenale* IV:1, and Backe-Forsberg 2005.

As a leader, Erik Wetter was decisive and forceful, sometimes causing conflicts between him and some of the younger researchers.⁵⁶ At the same time, it cannot be denied that his involvement in the operations of the Swedish Institute in Rome was hugely beneficial for the archaeologists. His connections in the business sector resulted in many financial contributions to the Institute and its excavations.⁵⁷ It is not an exaggeration to say that the San Giovenale and Acquarossa excavations would never have occurred without him.⁵⁸ When he turned 80, a bronze portrait was placed to the right of the entrance to the Institute to honour his work and dedication (Fig. 5). Throughout his life, Wetter received a large number of Swedish and foreign orders and decorations. He became an honorary member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1963 and received an honorary doctorate from Lund University in 1974. He died on 18 September 1985, at the age of 96.

Writing the history of the San Giovenale excavations

The writings on the history of the Swedish San Giovenale excavations have often emphasized two things: (1) the important contributions made to our knowledge about ancient domestic architecture, and (2) the function of the project as a training ground for Swedish students.⁵⁹ The correspondence above shows that the original goal of the excavations was something different. For the first season, the only plan was to excavate tombs and no Swedish student was asked to participate, only Eric Berggren who was then an experienced archaeologist in his 40s. Östenberg, who specifically stated that the tombs were excavated to provide a context for the urban remains, was not present for the first two campaigns. Nothing suggests that his statement was deliberately false, more likely he was just putting into writing his impression of the early days of the project. As an up-and-coming archaeologist involved in the project, it was of course also in his interest to depict the excavations positively. The history of the San Giovenale excavations provided legitimization for future Swedish excavation projects, and when Östenberg wrote his text, he was indeed already directing excavations at a new site (Acquarossa).⁶⁰ That

⁵⁶ Gierow 1986, 27; Nylander 1986, 2.

⁵⁷ Tobin 2014b, 77–78.

⁵⁸ Nylander 2001, 353.

⁵⁹ For example, when Wetter tells the story of his first visit to San Giovenale he asks the rhetorical question “And would it not give the Institute’s young scholars an opportunity for practical training in the field?” (Wetter 1962, 166).

⁶⁰ For the history of archaeology as a legitimizing force, see Gustafsson 2001, 101.

there was no concerted effort to misrepresent the early goals of the excavations is clear for example from Boëthius' account in *Etruscan culture, land and people* where he says that Wetter during his travels had become “especially intrigued by San Giovenale and its necropolises”.⁶¹

That excavations do not produce expected, or wanted, results is of course common. For example, one of the aims of the Swedish excavations at Labraunda, Turkey was to provide evidence for Bronze Age contacts between Labraunda and Crete. When, however, no Bronze Age finds were made, this research question was quietly dropped.⁶² What is interesting about San Giovenale is not the fact that the project changed its direction early on, but that this fact sometimes went unacknowledged. The historiography of San Giovenale reminds us that archaeologists who write the history of their own projects are far from impartial observers. However, the history of archaeology is often written by archaeologists. This can be a problem since “Being trained in the subtleties of stratigraphy and typology does not, however, provide archaeologists with the necessary tools to confront the history of their own discipline”.⁶³ The solution to this is not for archaeologists to stop involving themselves in the history of archaeology, but instead to engage with it together with historians and to cultivate a critical attitude to the historiography of their own discipline and their own projects.

FREDRIK TOBIN-DODD
Swedish Institute in Rome
Via Omero 14
00197 Rome, Italy
tobin@isvroma.org

Bibliography

Åkerström, Å. 1934. *Studien über die etruskischen Gräber, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklung des Kammergrabes* (ActaRom-4°, 3), Uppsala.

Architettura etrusca 1986 = *Architettura etrusca nel Viterbese. Ricerche svedesi a San Giovenale e Acquarossa 1956–1986*, eds. Ö. Wikander & P. Roos, Rome.

Backe-Forsberg, Y. 2005. Crossing the bridge. An interpretation of the archaeological remains in the Etruscan bridge complex at San Giovenale, Etruria, Ph.D. thesis, Uppsala University.

⁶¹ Boëthius 1962, xiii.

⁶² Stappas 2014, 307.

⁶³ Díaz-Andreu 2007, 1. See Gustafsson 2001, 189–196 for a discussion on archaeologists and non-archaeologists writing the history of archaeology.

Baglione, M.P. 2010. ‘La mostra dell’arte e della civiltà etrusca’, in *Massimo Pallottino—Tre momenti nella vita di un studioso. Lo scavo di Veio, lo scavo di Pyrgi, la Mostra di Milano nel 1955*, ed. M.P. Baglione, Rome, 50–51.

Billig, E., R. Billig & F. Whitling 2015. *Dies academicus. Svenska institutet i Rom 1925–1950*, Stockholm.

Boëthius, A. 1962. ‘Introduction’, in *Etruscan culture, land and people*, Malmö, ix–xiv.

Delpino, F. 2006. ‘«Caro Peppino..., Caro Mario...»: notarelle visentine’, in *Archeologia in Etruria meridionale. Atti delle giornate di studio in ricordo di Mario Moretti, Civita Castellana, 14–15 novembre, 2003*, ed. M. Pandolfini Angeletti, Rome, 17–31.

Díaz-Andreu, M. 2007. *A world history of nineteenth-century archaeology. Nationalism, colonialism, and the past*, Oxford.

Dyson, S.L. 2006. *In pursuit of ancient pasts. A history of classical archaeology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, New Haven & London.
<https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300110975.001.0001>

Dyson, S.L. 2019. *Archaeology, ideology and urbanism in Rome from the Grand Tour to Berlusconi*, Cambridge.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139029759>

Gierow, P.G. 1986. ‘Erik Wetter’, *Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitetsakademiens Årsbok 1986*, 26–29.

Gren, E. 1960. ‘Nordiska forskningsinsatser inom etruskologin’, in *San Giovenale. Etruskerna. Landet och folket. Svensk forskning i Etrurien*, Malmö, 335–352.

Gustafsson, A. 2001. Arkeologihistoria som historia och som arkeologi. Studier i arkeologins egenhistorier, Ph.D. thesis, University of Gothenburg.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/15274>

Materiali e problemi 1984 = *San Giovenale. Materiali e problemi. Atti del simposio all’Istituto Svedese di Studi Classici a Roma 6 aprile 1983* (ActaRom-4°, 41), eds. S. Forsberg & B.E. Thomasson, Stockholm.

Nylander, C. 1986. ‘Erik Wetter in memoriam’, *Romhorisont* 11, 2.

Nylander, C. 2001. ‘Humanister vid Medelhavet. Svenska institutet i Rom 1926–2001’, in *Humanist vid Medelhavet. Reflektioner och studier samlade med anledning av Svenska institutet i Roms 75-årsjubileum*, ed. B. Magnusson, Stockholm, 345–384.

- San Giovenale I:1* = B.E. Thomasson 1972. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, I:1. General introduction* (ActaRom-4°, 26:1:1), Stockholm.
- San Giovenale I:4* = C.E. Östenberg 1972. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, I:4. The tombs. Introduction* (ActaRom-4°, 26:1:4), Stockholm.
- San Giovenale I:5* = E. Berggren & K. Berggren 1972. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, I:5. The necropoleis of Porzarago, Grotte Tufarina and Montevangone* (ActaRom-4°, 26:1:5), Stockholm.
- San Giovenale IV:1* = L. Karlsson 2006. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, IV:1. Area F East. Huts and houses on the Acropolis* (ActaRom-4°, 26:4:1), Stockholm.
- San Giovenale V:1* = C. Nylander, B. Blomé, L. Karlsson, A. Bizzarro, G. Tilia, S. Tilia & A. Tilia 2013. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, V:1. The Borgo. Excavating an Etruscan quarter. Architecture and stratigraphy* (ActaRom-4°, 26:5:1), Stockholm.
- San Giovenale V:2* = Pohl, I. 2009. *San Giovenale. Results of excavations conducted by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies at Rome and the Soprintendenza alle Antichità dell'Etruria Meridionale, V:2. The Borgo. The Etruscan habitation quarter on the north-west slope. Stratification and materials* (ActaRom-4°, 26:5:2), Stockholm.
- Siapkas, J. 2014. 'Karian theories. Seeking the origins of ancient Greece', in *ΑΒΡΥΣ. Studies presented to Pontus Hellström*, eds. L. Karlsson, S. Carlsson & J. Blid Kullberg, Uppsala, 301–314.
- SOU 1927:29 = C. Malmroth, E. Gustafson, B. Holmgren, P. A. Hansson & L. Widell 1927. *Betänkande och förslag rörande den centrala försvarsförvaltningen* (Statens offentliga utredningar 1927:29), Stockholm.
- SvD 1935 = 'Kronprinsens resa lysande propaganda', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 13 January, 3, 22.
- Tobin, F. 2014a. 'The changing burial landscape of San Giovenale', in *L'Etruria meridionale rupestre. Atti del convegno internazionale "L'Etruria rupestre dalla Protostoria al Medioevo. Insediamenti, necropoli, monumenti, confronti"*. Barbarano Romano—Blera, 8–10 ottobre 2010, Rome, 223–229.
- Tobin, F. 2014b. 'Amiral Erik Wetters arkeologiska verksamhet', in *Svensk antikforskning vid Medelhavet. Gustaf VI Adolf och fältarkeologi i historiskt perspektiv* (Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, konferenser, 87), ed. F. Whitling, Stockholm, 77–80.
- Tobin, F. 2015. The chamber tombs of San Giovenale and the funerary landscapes of South Etruria, Ph.D. thesis, Uppsala University.
- Wetter, E. 1955. *Släkten Wetter från Jönköping. Några anteckningar*, Gothenburg.
- Wetter, E. 1960. 'Studier och strövtåg i södra Etrurien', in *San Giovenale. Etruskerna. Landet och folket. Svensk forskning i Etrurien*, Malmö, 153–216.
- Wetter, E. 1962. 'Studies and strolls in southern Etruria', in *Etruscan culture, land and people*, Malmö, 163–230.
- Wetter, E. 1969. 'Ricerche topografiche nei territori circostanti Acqua Rossa', *OpRom* 7, 109–137.
- Wetter, E. 1970. 'Svenska institutet i Rom, en återblick', *Årskrönika. Svenska institutet i Rom. Föreningen svenska rominstitutets vänner 1970*, 1–3.
- Wetter, E. 1972. 'Landskapet kring Acquarossa', in *Med kungen på Acquarossa*, Malmö, 73–102.
- Wetter, E. 1976. 'Forskning och ekonomi. En skattmästares återblick på Svenska institutets i Rom utveckling', in *Svenska institutet i Rom 1926–1976*, ed. C.E. Östenberg, Rome, 59–67.
- Wetter, E. & M.H. Lundgren 1984. *Släkten Wetter från Jönköping. Några anteckningar* (revised edition), Täby.
- Whitling, F. 2010. The western way. Academic diplomacy: foreign academies and the Swedish Institute in Rome, 1935–1953, Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute, Florence.
<https://doi.org/10.2870/64251>
- Whitling, F. 2019. *Western ways. Foreign schools in Rome and Athens*, Berlin & Boston.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110602531>